

New Cat Checklist



Food :

Dry food. Dry food is great to allow your pet to graze throughout the day. The type of dry will depend on your pet's age, dental health (they may need the "soft" dry or smaller kibbles, and overall health. For example, diabetic pets need a high protein, low carb dry food. Kidney disease pets need low protein, low phosphorous foods. You may need to try several different foods so buy the smallest bag first. Some cats only like fish flavors, others only poultry. If you have multiple cats, you may need to buy more than 1 dry food.

Wet food. Wet food is great for treats. It is also helpful for older pets that need more moisture to prevent dehydration. It is also often the best food for kidney disease because of the low phosphorous and high moisture. Older pets may require a less fatty or rich wet food to avoid GI issues, or smaller portions of wet food (versus a whole can at once). Like dry food, different cats prefer different flavors and textures (gravy versus pate). A sample pack is a great way to start.

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Food & Food Bowls:

Dry food Bowls. Use at least 2 bowls with a large enough opening they can get their head in there to scoop up kibbles as the food gets low in the bowl. Even if you only have 1 cat, 2 bowls allows on in the dishwasher while the other is in use. The bowls should be emptied and washed once a week. If you have multiple cats, place multiple bowls in more than 1 location to avoid fighting or bullying one cat away from the food.

Wet food Bowls. Use separate, small bowls for wet food and each cat should receive their own wet food bowl to avoid fights or bullying. Wet food is essential for sick or older pets that need hydration and may not drink enough water on their own. It's especially good for cats with Diabetes or Kidney disease.

Note on Automatic Feeders: NEVER leave a dog or cat unattended for over a day with no one to check. The feeder could get stuck, tipped over, or if it's outside another animal could eat all the food. A former pet sitter of mine got fired after relying on these and not checking that my Fiona had accidentally trapped herself and was stuck for 2 days without food and water or litter box access.

Note on Keeping Dogs from eating the Cat Food: If you have a dog that likes to eat the cat food, you can put the cat food up on a table or high bench.

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Water bowls:

- Stainless Steel – Stainless steel is always best but any kind that can hold a large supply without tipping over works. Buy low and wide, versus tall and narrow to avoid ones that your cat could tip over especially if they like to paw the water (see Tips for Splashers below for more advice on that).
- Ceramic – I like ceramic bowls because they are so heavy and can't be tipped over.
- Fountains - I use the “Sparkletts” style fountains versus the plug-in type so I don't have to worry about it tipping over and the pump burning out when I may not be home for hours. It's just safer. I do have a fountain for when I am home, but I've found they still prefer the sink!

Water bowls should be emptied and refilled once a day because cats sometimes dribble food or wash their paws in the water bowl and leave litter residue. Sick and elderly pets tend to get dehydrated and fresh water often with a few ice cubes really encourages drinking.

Tips for Splashers: Place a large sized potty pad under the water bowls if you have a cat that likes to splash with their paw. Towels absorb the water and hold the wetness against the carpet or wood floor, while the potty pad absorbs, but has a plastic backing so the moisture is not against the flooring for hours.

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Scratch-Play-Rest

Cat posts. This gives a cat something to use instead of your furniture! Use catnip spray to attract even the most stubborn of cats (I prefer the Kong brand).

Scratchers. These can double as toys if you buy the kind with the track ball around the scratcher. You can also buy the kind that hang from the doorknob although I had a cat get a claw stuck on one and ended up hanging by an arm which caused minor injury.

- **Toys.** Fuzzy mice, catnip filled soft toys, crackly balls, jingle balls – buy a variety pack to see which your cat prefers before buying more of that type.
- **Interactive:** Battery powered, laser lights, wand toys. All designed to keep your cat busy when you're not there. Be sure to stock up on AAA and AA batteries!
- **Boxes.** Save those boxes your orders come in because cats consider “cardboard city” the best toy of all! Paper bags too, but make sure you cut through the handles to avoid choking or hanging themselves.

Beds.

- Soft, cave style, crackle style, condo style, self-warming for arthritic elderly cats – you may have to try a few to see which your cat prefers. There are even ones that plug in and warm, but never leave plugged in when you are not home. Instead use a SnuggleSafe microwaveable disc (see below) or self warming pad in the bed.
- If they have incontinence issues, place potty pads underneath to avoid urine soaking into furniture or flooring.

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Litter: Litter varies almost as much as food. The best litter will in part be determined by your cat, as well as your household needs.

- Senior – Dr. Elsey’s is a great choice for seniors who due to arthritis will have trouble balancing on rougher textured litter.
- Scented/Unscented – Some cats will not use a box with scented litter; they consider that scent another cat’s territory.
- Clay vs paper vs cedar – The paper can leave a strong urine residue, and be extremely hard for an older cat to balance on, while the cedar has a strong scent and can cause the cat to avoid it.
- Dust – it is definitely worth the slight extra cost to go with a no dust or low dust clumping litter. It will save your house and air filters!

Litter Boxes:

- Domed – Domed are fine for younger cats, but senior cats will have trouble because it’s already hard for them to get in and squat; the lid will make it even harder and cause them to go outside the box.
- High Sided – These are great especially if you have a vigorous coverer that flings litter, however again if you have a senior with arthritis give them a step stool to get in and out of it as jumping will not be an option.
- Flat Pans – These are great for seniors; you can even just tape potty pads to the bottom rather than use litter.
- Disposable – These are useful when you have a cat that has worms or other illnesses that can be spread by sharing a litter box, and you must keep them quarantined and throw away any unused litter.

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Identification

Collar. Pets need a collar with your mobile phone on it AND your Vet or Pet Sitters number. Most people won't bother to pick up your pet and take them to a Vet clinic or Shelter where there is a microchip scanner, but they WILL call if your number is handy. Safety stretch collars are the best to avoid the pet becoming trapped and choking if the collar catches on a fence or branch.

Microchip: Collars sometimes come off, so microchips are imperative. Every Vet clinic and shelter has a microchip scanner. UPDATE your information anytime your number changes or your address. Include your Veterinarian and Pet Sitters phone numbers too.