

FREQUENTLY ASKED:

Fussy eaters: how to change things up

As guided by Amy

FOUNDER, NOOSA COUNTRY CAT HOTEL

Placement of the Dish Matters

Cats prefer to eat in quiet, low-traffic areas where they feel safe and in control. Place food away from the litter tray, loud appliances and busy doorways. Some cats like elevated spots, while others prefer ground level. Let your cat choose what feels right.

References

ISFM (2022). Feline Environmental Needs Guidelines.
AAFP (2022). Environmental Needs Guidelines.

Use a Whisker-Friendly Dish

Cats have sensitive whiskers that can experience 'whisker fatigue' when their whiskers constantly touch the sides of deep or narrow bowls. Use wide, shallow dishes so their whiskers stay relaxed and mealtimes are more comfortable.

References

Sebastian, S., et al. (2017). Impact of bowl shape on whisker contact in cats. *Applied Animal Behaviour Science*, 195, 1–6.

Offer Variety and Choice

Cats can be naturally selective. Offering a variety of textures, protein sources and flavours can help maintain interest in their food. Rotating between options and offering two different foods at mealtimes can encourage intake without creating fussiness.

References

Kessler, M. R., et al. (2013). A survey of cat feeding practices and factors associated with diet choice. *JFMS Open Reports*, 1(1).

Keep a Consistent Routine

Cats thrive on routine. Offer meals at the same times each day and remove uneaten food after 20–30 minutes. Leaving food down all day can reduce appetite and encourage grazing, which may lead to pickiness.

References

ISFM (2022). Feline Environmental Needs Guidelines.
AAFP (2022). Nutrition Guidelines.

Make Mealtimes Positive and Stress-Free

A calm, predictable environment helps cats feel secure enough to eat. Avoid fussing, forcing or changing too many things at once. If your cat is anxious, address the underlying stressors first, such as loud noises or changes in the home.

References

Overall, K. L. (2014). The clinical behavioral medicine approach to feline feeding problems. *Veterinary Clinics of North America: Small Animal Practice*, 44(1), 107–125.

Try Small Tweaks Before Big Changes

If your cat suddenly becomes a fussy eater, start with simple adjustments: change the dish, move the location, warm the food slightly, or offer a different texture. Small, gradual changes are less likely to overwhelm your cat and can make a big difference.

References

International Cat Care (2023). *Practical Guide to Feline Feeding Problems*.



Fussy eating is often about comfort, routine and choice. By adjusting the placement of the dish, using whisker-friendly bowls, offering variety and keeping mealtimes positive and predictable, you can help your cat enjoy their food again. Small changes can lead to happier, healthier mealtimes.

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