

Cats And Their Litterboxes

The best thing about cats is that they don't need to be potty-trained. Relieving themselves in soft, loose material and burying their waste is an innate behavior, so even young kittens know what to do without being shown. All you have to do is provide an acceptable litterbox for the cat to do her business.

Where should you put the litterbox?

The litterbox should be located in a place that provides the cat with some amount of privacy but that is convenient for her to get to. It may be desirable to you to put the litterbox in the basement but your cat may find the basement unacceptable. A small kitten may not be able to climb down the stairs, or the floor may be too cold to walk on. Additionally, basements house a variety of giant noise-making monsters like the furnace, washer, and dryer. If a cat is frightened by the noise of one of these appliances while she is using her litterbox, she may not want to return to that location to eliminate.

What kind of litterbox should you use?

A standard plastic litterbox is preferred by most cats. If you have a kitten, make sure the sides are not too high for her to get into the box. Some cats prefer a super-sized litter box so you can use a sweater box (the kind you put under your bed) as a litterbox. Covered litterboxes can pose problems for some cats because they trap odor. A covered box that is not cleaned very often quickly becomes unacceptable to most cats. Most cats do not like the plastic box liners because they smell funny and their claws can get stuck in them when they bury their waste.

What kind of litter should you use?

Most cats prefer fine-grained, soft substrates for elimination, so the clumping litters or dust-free small grained clay litters are most acceptable. Usually the pellet-type litters or those that are scented are unacceptable to cats. Find the type of litter your cat prefers by giving her a choice of two or three different litterboxes containing different litters. Once you find what type of litter she likes, stick with it. Do not put more than 2-3 inches of litter in the box. Cats do not like to sink into their toilet.

How many litterboxes should you have?

If you have multiple cats, you should have multiple boxes in multiple locations in the house. A good rule of thumb is one box per cat plus one. Do not put them all in the same room, this essentially creates one toilet area, not several.

How often should you clean the litterbox?

You must keep the litterbox consistently clean to meet the needs of most cats. Scoop the feces and clumped urine out every day and totally change the litter at least once a week. Do not use strong smelling cleaning products to wash out the box. The residual smell may cause your cat to avoid the box. It is sufficient to wash out the box with dish soap and water at each changing.

What does it mean if your cat stops using the litterbox?

The first thing to consider is taking the cat to the veterinarian. It may be a medical condition causing your cat to eliminate outside the box. If the veterinarian does not find a medical problem, consider behavioral causes. Did you recently change litter brands? Did you move the box location? Are you cleaning the box often enough? Did something scare the cat when she was using the litterbox? Is there unrest between the family cats? There are many reasons why cats stop using their litterboxes. Do a little detective work to try to figure out what is going on.