

# Keeping Cats Indoors

Cats can live very happily indoors. They can still have fun hiding and playing and curling up to sleep in a quiet corner and the best news is that statistically, the average lifespan of a happy indoor cat is many years higher than for outdoor cats. Many owners also feel that their cat becomes more affectionate and devoted when indoors with the family all of the time.



There are lots of hazards for cats living outdoors. They have a natural tendency to roam into other backyards, fight if they come across another cat and wander on to roads and sometimes, get into trouble before they can find their way back home. They are also natural hunters and so the environmental damage that they can cause is significant.

## Indoor Play

There are a huge variety of cat toys to keep a cat happy for hours. Cats love things that spin, roll and twist and if they make a little bit of noise, even better. Homemade toys are easy and cheap. Try folding a piece of newspaper like a fan and tying it with string from a door handle. Or attach some gift wrapping string to a stick or your ankle and as you move around the house, encourage your

For a cat, the perfect home would have a room with a view, windows with morning sun, a heater for the winter and a high spot to sit above all else. It would have a few climbing towers and a place to scratch, toys to chase and a butler to bring it food and give it a massage at the same time every day.



cat to chase the string and pounce. Even a cardboard box or toilet roll will provide hours of fascination for an active cat.

Catnip in toys will give cats a “high” which lasts five to ten minutes. They will roll around and play with the toy and then eventually wander off for a relaxing cat nap.



To encourage your cat to use its sense of smell, hide a few treats around the house including up high so that they get the chance to jump up and down. Cat toys with a perpetual rolling motion and treat balls encourage your cat to play and exercise even when you're not at home and colourful wands are an enticing target for them to stalk and capture.



If your cat is left alone for most of the day, another cat mate to play with could be just the thing. They will keep each other entertained and exercised and will ensure that neither is lonely when you are not at home.

### Better Tip

For something quite different, why not buy a video just for your cat. They will spend hours glued to the screen watching bugs and birds and listening to their noise, just like the great outdoors. Cats love watching telly!



### Favourite Spots

Just like us, cats like to have a quiet place that they can retreat into if they get stressed from new people in the house, noisy kids or just to have a little “cat nap”. An igloo bed or box lined with carpet and warm bedding will do the trick nicely. Ensure that any unsuitable or dangerous spots are blocked off.

Cats love sitting on a sunny window sill and watching the world go by. If one isn't available, install a window seat or piece of furniture under a window for them to curl up on. Remember that your cat will be happy looking out the window but this doesn't mean that it wants to get out. It is probably just enjoying the bugs and birds that it sees through the glass.



### Cat Enclosures

Some cats are incredibly spoilt and not only get the run of the house but also their own outdoor retreat where they can safely wander into the sun and enjoy the noise and stimulation of the garden.

Cat enclosure kits are available or someone who is particularly handy could build one from galvanised mesh ensuring that it is fully enclosed and does not have any sharp edges or loose joints. Cat enclosures are ideal for patios, backyards and even balconies and can be freestanding or attach to a window with a cat flap to the house allowing the cat to move in and out as they please.

Enclosures are often furnished with scratch poles, staircases, high catwalks and hammocks so that a cat can bask in the sun, wander around and play until their heart's content.

Covered areas also allow the cat to enjoy the outdoors with protection from the sun or the rain.

### Walking your Cat

Cats can actually be trained to walk on a lead. It does take a little time and effort but it is a terrific way to exercise a cat whilst keeping them safe and in control. Cat harnesses are made especially to suit their small frame. Cats should be allowed to get used to a harness first by just being around it and rubbing against



it. When fitting the harness for the first few times, don't attach the lead, simply allow the cat to wear it for a few minutes at a time to become used to the feeling. The harness should be reasonably firm so that the cat can't wriggle out of it.

After a few days, attach the lead and again, allow some time for the cat to get used to this new sensation. You may need to repeat this step over a few days. Speak calmly and stroke the cat slowly so that it knows it's safe.

Once the cat has accepted the lead, encourage it to move around the house wearing the harness and lead. Eventually, when the cat is used to the lead, you can head outside for a walk around the garden. Walking a cat is not like a dog. On most occasions, the cat will be the one making the decisions on where to go and you just need to tag along behind. This is fine as the aim is for the cat to get some exercise and outdoor stimulation and unlike dogs, will not want to head off to the park or a walk along suburban streets.



## Feeding

Indoor cats are usually less active and more prone to weight problems so cat biscuits and canned food are now available that help maintain a healthy weight whilst still providing the antioxidants, vitamins and minerals that they need. Specifically designed foods for indoor cats also help avoid the formation of hairballs and reduce the stool odour associated with some foods.



Do not give cats cow's milk as many cats are lactose intolerant and it can cause tummy upsets and severe diarrhoea. Specific cat milk is available to offer as an occasional treat.

Cats will often refuse to eat from a dirty bowl so these should be washed well between each meal. Stainless steel or ceramic bowls are hygienic and easy to wash. Cats also prefer water that is fresh from the tap so change their water regularly or try providing a cat water bubbler which circulates the water, keeping it fresh and aerated.

Outdoor cats will often chew on grass for nutrients or to help control hairballs and this can easily be provided indoors as well. Cat Grass is easy to grow and cats will often chew it almost to the ground. Have two pots of Cat Grass growing at any one time so that one can be indoors for your cat to nibble on and the other can be outdoors recovering and growing more leaves ready to be swapped over. Catnip plants are also available which cats will enjoy sniffing and rubbing up against.

## Litter Trays

Cats are fastidiously clean and have a very good sense of smell, so their litter tray needs to be cleaned daily. Provide an indoor cat with a couple of trays if you are not available to clean the solids from the tray throughout the day. Also, use the ones with a hood, as these minimise the smells around the house. Wash the box with soap and warm water to prevent odours being absorbed by the plastic.

Cat litter trays are not the only option for indoor cats. Toilet training systems are available to teach a cat to use a normal household toilet. They work with a series of trays which fit in the toilet and are filled with cat litter. The cat learns to use these and over time the trays are removed and the cat begins to use the toilet without them. Of course, the cat won't flush the toilet or put the seat down but for some, this might be just the thing.

Alternatively, cats can be trained to use a pet loo which is a piece of artificial turf over a reservoir. The cat goes to the toilet on the grass and the liquid drains underneath whilst the solid sits on top to be collected. The whole unit is easily cleaned and sterilised.

*Visit any Better Pets and Gardens store to view the wide variety of cat litter available and to choose the best type for your cat.*



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