



Enrichment for Cats

(Keeping Kitties Happy and Healthy)

Cats that go outside can do many things like hunt, explore, and check out other cats. Indoor kitties are not so lucky when it comes to entertainment options. However, we still prefer that you keep your cat indoors. It is much safer and indoor only cats live longer lives.

That means you have to improve the indoors to keep your cat busy and happy. The term for this is enrichment: improving the environment to avoid stress.

This is important or your cat can become sick!

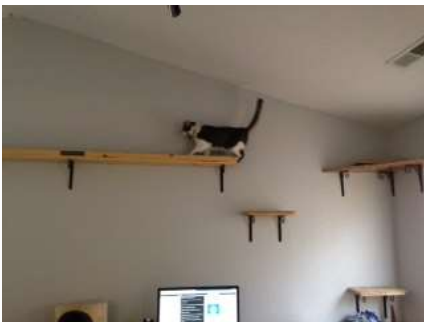
Environmental enrichment can lower “sickness behaviors” such as:

- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Not eating well
- Fever
- Lethargy
- Not using the litter box
- Grooming less
- Hiding behaviors

They have physical illnesses but it is due to stress and not to an underlying disease. Obviously, it would be much better to keep our kitties happy!

Vertical Spaces

Cats love to climb. They love to be high up and watch over their domain. Therefore, give them space to do so. Use shelves as steps up the wall leading to a long shelf or bed. Have a floor to ceiling cat tower. Make sure



there are beds or lounging areas in the main areas of the house such as the living room. If the room is important to your family, it's important to your cat as well. By providing them with their own space, you can avoid them jumping on areas that they shouldn't (like the mantel since we know how they love to jump up there and knock everything down!).



Hiding Spots

Cats need to feel safe. Providing them with several hiding spots, on several levels, allow your cats to hide when necessary. They feel safe and comfortable. Usually, you will find a cat sleeping in these safe spots. You can buy beds, pop up tents, or use a box. Below is a creative way to make your own!



Toys

Make sure there are a variety of toys available. . You will discover the type your cat likes best. Most like toys that act like prey. The little furry mice, lightweight balls, and toys with feathers are often a hit. They

like things they can pick up, carry around and toss into the air.

Give them larger toys to hold and kick with their back legs. If your cat likes to chew, get a cat chew toy.



Some toys can be played with alone while others are interactive such as laser pointers or wands. Playing with your cat daily can help strengthen your bond and make them tired so they don't bother you in the middle of the night or early morning.

Rotate the toys available to your cat every week. By doing this, your cat gets to play with "new" toys regularly. Food toys can also be used. Your cat has to roll the toy or work to get the food out of it. They are great if you have a food driven cat. Simply fill the food toy and let them go!

Scratching Posts



Since scratching is a normal cat behavior, provide your cat with a variety of scratching posts. Make sure they are tall enough that your cat can properly stretch out

completely. If your cat likes to scratch the floor, provide scratching mats. You can make your own scratching posts or buy them at any pet store. Some cats will prefer the ones that are carpeted, while others prefer something like sisal rope.

Outside Viewing

Some cats want to sit in the window and watch the world. Provide window seats that are secured to the wall.

Use caution. Some cats do not do well if they see another cat outside the window. For these cats, you will want to close the drapes and use a movie of birds instead.



Outside Play Space

If you are handy, you can build an outdoor play area for your cat. Make sure it is fenced in completely and secure so that your cat cannot escape. Line the area with shelves to provide vertical space. You can add tree branches for climbing. Be creative!



Litter Boxes

To avoid stress, each cat should have their own litter box plus one extra. This helps avoid bullying at the box. There should be at least one box on every level of a house as well.

Grooming

Cats that live together (and like each other) will groom each other. It's a way for them to bond. You can bond with your cat by grooming them routinely. Rather than making a big deal out of it, have a comb or brush near where you normally sit. As your cat comes to sit in your lap, brush them a little.



Make sure not to overdo it. Cats can be sensitive to grooming. Watch your cat for signs that they are done being groomed.

When trying to enrich the environment for your cat, try to think like a cat. They like to be high up, hide in boxes, scratch a lot, and poop in private. They have a playful side and enjoy grooming.

You can make many enrichment items on your own. If you don't have the ability or lack the time, there are countless items available at pet stores and online.

