



# Litterbox Training

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Lucky for us, cats are naturally clean animals. They don't want to look at their waste any more than we do. Most cats learn as kittens to use either a litter box or a hole dug in some soft material, such as dirt. However, a few kittens simply are not taught good toilet habits early on and their owner must take over training.

## **Bringing Home a New Cat**

When bringing home a new cat, your first task is to make it very clear precisely what you would have him use for his toilet.

- Have the litter box already set-up and filled with litter.
- When you arrive home with the feline, immediately place the cat in the litter box. Even if he jumps out, the seed has been planted in his mind.
- When you are unable to monitor the new cat or kitten, confine her to a limited area with just her litter box, food, water, and a bed. This gives the cat the opportunity to really orient herself to the litter pan.
- Slowly open your home to the new pet. Giving freedom in small increments—for instance one room at a time—will help the cat learn to return to his litter box each time the need arises. A young kitten allowed to roam the entire house can become disoriented and unable to find the litter box.

## **Litter Box Problems**

When a cat has faithfully used a litter box all her life but suddenly starts leaving messes around the house, or a new cat avoids the litter pan from the start, the first thing to do is visit your veterinarian. Before you go, make a list of all the places the cat has urinated or defecated, how often, when, and any changes in the environment. Also, make a note of what the stool looks like and arrange to bring a sample. You may find the problem is one the veterinarian can solve.

If a possible medical problem has been eliminated as a cause, begin to consider the cat's environment. Has anything changed?

## **Addition of a New Cat**

Some cats will chase others from the litter pan. Give in gracefully and provide multiple litter boxes around the house so each cat can establish their own territory.

## **A New Dog**

Bringing a new dog into the house can often be traumatic enough to frighten the cat away from his usual litter area. Again, provide your cat with a box in an area where he can feel safe and unchallenged.

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## **Strengthening the Bond Between Pets and People**

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**Human Conflict**

Remember that animals are very sensitive to our moods and feelings. Tensions among the humans in a home can cause unwanted new behaviors in family pets.

**Changing Brands of Litter**

A new type of litter may be unsettling to your cat. If you decide to change, do so gradually. When moving a cat into the house from outside, you may need to start with soil in the litter box and slowly add litter until a complete transition to litter is accomplished.

**Lack of Privacy**

Cats enjoy privacy just as we do. Accommodate this desire by placing the litter box in a quiet, out of the way location or providing a covered box.

**Improper Housekeeping**

Cats don't want to use a messy toilet any more than you would. Daily cleaning is essential to prevent your cat from looking for a more sanitary bathroom.

**Litterbox Placement**

Is your cat's pan too near her food? Cats don't like to soil an area where they may be eating their next meal. Also, beware of placing the litter box on the carpet—cats are irresistibly drawn to carpeting and this may cause even the best-trained cat to wander. Don't forget that to your cat, a bath mat may be as good as a rug. Simply hanging the bath mat over the shower curtain when not in use removes the temptation.

**Spraying**

Does your cat back up against the couch or wall and douse it in a stream of urine? This is often mistaken as a litter box problem. However, it is actually the cat "spraying". Both male and female cats can spray. The reasons they do this are similar to those of other soiling problems—territory, emotional upset, and physical problems. The sight of a strange cat crossing the yard is often disturbing enough to your cat that he may feel threatened and spray to secure his territory.

These problems are solvable if you are willing to work with your pets and take the time to examine the root of the problem.