

Litter Box Training Your Cat

Most cats can be trained at any age to use a litter box. Choosing the type of box and litter is very important.

- Make sure that the litter box you choose for your cat or kitten is shallow enough to allow them to easily enter and exit the box.
- Litter types vary drastically from brand to brand. Some cats may not like the textures and scents of some litters. Scoopable brands are generally better tolerated than clay types of litter. Switching brands of litter may upset your cat and cause him to change litter box habits, so use the same brand of litter consistently if your cat seems to like it.

Have your litter box set up and ready for your cat's use before introducing your cat to his new home. Ideally, the box should be placed in a quiet room where the cat will be kept until it has adjusted to its new environment and family members. Cats may also be more comfortable using a litter box in an out-of-the-way area and not near where they sleep or eat.

Show your cat or kitten where the litter box is immediately. Gently set the cat in the box frequently the first day that your cat is home to remind him of the location, and praise him when he uses the box. If the cat seems lost and starts pawing at carpets or rugs, immediately and gently place him in the box. Pawing at carpet, rugs, upholstery or other soft items may be a sign that the cat is searching for a place to use and can't find the box. Your cat should not be allowed to have full unsupervised access to the house until it is consistently using the litter box.

Remove waste in the litter box daily and change the litter about once a week. If you don't use litter box liners, clean the empty box about once a week with a mild soap and water. Cats can be sensitive to scents, so don't use fragrant sprays or cleaners on a litter box.

Some cats may be tempted to use a houseplant as a litter box. Cover soil with mulch, stones or tinfoil to prevent them from starting this habit or move plants to an area where they can't be reached by cats.

When a cat stops using the litter box

There are many reasons why cats stop using their litter boxes including environmental or medical factors. Environmental factors include:

- a change in litter brands, scents or texture
- a scent or combination of scents in litter or cleaners used on the box that the cat doesn't like
- a litter box that has not had the waste removed often enough
- a cat's dislike of liners or hoods
- something that has frightened the cat near the box, including loud or unusual noises, children or other pets

Most importantly, medical problems frequently cause cats to not use the litter box. Your veterinarian can help you determine the cause of the problem.