

LITTER BOX TIPS



- 1. Litter cleaning practices.** A dirty litter box is the #1 cause of house-soiling. The litter box should be cleaned with a scoop daily. The litter should be changed every 2-4 weeks depending on usage. Plastic absorbs odor, so the box should be scrubbed out with a mild detergent at every litter change and replaced every year. Make sure to fill the box with enough litter so that the cat can actively dig in it (3-4 inches).
- 2. Too few litter boxes.** The rule of thumb for the number of boxes is at least one per cat plus one.
- 3. Litter box type.** A covered box may concentrate odor. A self-cleaning box may scare the cat. Most commercial litter boxes are too small for adult cats. Ideally, the litter box should be 1.5 times the length of the cat's body from nose to rump. Ideally, try an uncovered, extra large litter box (litter boxes made for dogs or a modified plastic storage container are often best).
- 4. Avoid fear associated with the litter box.** One cat may be guarding the litter box or ambushing others while they are in the box. Try providing uncovered litter boxes spread throughout the house. Also avoid catching, cornering, or otherwise scaring the cat while it is in the box, as this may cause the cat to avoid the litter box.
- 5. Litter box location.** Avoid noisy locations (such as utility rooms), locations distant from where the cat spends time, and locations with difficult access (e.g. a geriatric cat is unlikely to appreciate having to jump over a baby gate to access the litter box). Litter boxes should be near activity, but not in a busy area. They should be easily accessible, in multiple locations, and not near the cat's food. Multi-storied houses should have one on each level.
- 6. Litter type.** Some cats have preferences about cat litter scent (unscented is usually best) and texture (scoopable litter usually preferred). **Do not make an abrupt change in litter type** (even different brands of litter), as this can cause up to 50% of cats to stop using the litter box. 25% of cats will not go back to using the box, even if the old litter is reinstated. To change the litter type, begin mixing the old litter with the new. Gradually increase the amount of new litter used, and decrease the amount of old, until the transition is complete. To find out which litter your cat prefers, you can provide a "buffet" of several different litter types and see which type your cat uses. Some cats may not want litter at all, and may require dirt, rag rugs, carpet pieces, cedar chips, newspaper, or other material as an alternative litter box substrate. Cat Attract Litter Additive may be added to the litter to help encourage the cat to use the litter box.

If any house-soiling occurs, clean the area with an enzymatic cleaner made for cat urine/feces. Zero Odor Pet is one such cleaner that works well. Address any urination/defecation that occurs outside the litter box early with your veterinarian as many medical problems can cause house-soiling, and behavioral house-soiling is harder to treat the longer the problem has persisted. Also be aware that the risk of behavioral house-soiling increases about 10% with each additional cat added to the household.

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