



Entertain your kitties' brains! *Environmental Enrichment Suggestions*

Expert health and behavior advice from the feline care professionals at
Paws, Whiskers & Claws
The Feline Hospital
www.pawswhiskersandclaws.com

Here at Paws Whiskers & Claws, we advocate indoor only cats. This lifestyle keeps them healthier, safer and living longer lives. However, cats may get bored or frustrated being kept inside. Below are some suggestions for keeping them active, stimulated and happy. Remember that cats are very prey specific, so trying different varieties of toys is important to find just what your cat likes to hunt.

Alphabet Magnets

Place these on the lower half of the fridge, oven, dishwasher, or on a magnetic board for your cat to bat around. You can find these at most toy stores.

Birds and Bees

For visual entertainment attract birds or squirrels with strategic placement of bird and squirrel feeders outside windows and screened porches. For nighttime viewing, try leaving a porch light on to attract flying insects. This may help you sleep better if your cat is active at night.

Bringing the Outside In

As long as your cat is current on vaccinations and deworming, bring in tree branches, rocks, leaves, things from the outdoors to pique their senses. Try hiding treats around or under these items for extra fun, or fill a box with leaves and throw a handful of treats in for your cat to forage. Additionally, you may purchase live catnip or grass plants from most PetsMart locations. These plants provide instant gratification and cost about \$5.00 each.

Cat Carrier

Try leaving your cat's carrier out in the home all the time. Make it inviting by placing bedding and/or treats inside for your cat to enjoy. This will also desensitize your cat to the carrier making trips to the vet easier for both of you.

Catnip Marinade

Place all soft fuzzy toys in container with catnip to "marinate". You can do this as often as needed to refresh the scent. This can be financially helpful because you won't have to buy new toys as often.

Chirping Fuzzy Mice and Birds

Wal Mart has a gray one with pink ears that is a favorite. There are many versions of this motion activated toy. Some chirp like live mice, some move around and some have flashing lights.

Drinking Fountain

There are several different water fountains for cats that simulate drinking from a stream or water faucet. The model we prefer is the Drinkwell Pet Fountain. It can be taken apart and cleaned, has charcoal filters that can be replaced as needed and you can purchase an optional reservoir which is great for multi-cat households or cats that require lots of fresh water. Retail price starts at

approximately \$49.99 and can be ordered directly from the manufacturer at www.vetventures.com or by calling 866-322-2530. Also available at PetsMart.

Feline Furniture

Cat Condos will give your cat a place of their own, increase vertical space in your home and create "safe zones" from dogs, children or other cats. Our favorite condos are from www.AngelicalCat.com, they carry a wide array of styles, sizes and colors. You may reach Angelical Cat by phone at 954-747-3629. Some other websites we recommend are www.TrendyCat.com, www.KittyPod.com and www.TheRefinedFeline.com. Scratching posts and horizontal cardboard scratching pads give your cat an appropriate surface to scratch. The "Cat's Meow Scratching Post" is available at Paws Whiskers & Claws for \$60. Cardboard scratchers are available at most pet retail outlets such as PetsMart and the cost starts at approximately \$6.95.

Fish Tanks

Having a fish tank is an excellent way to keep your cat occupied, especially at night when you are trying to sleep. Obviously, you'll want to make sure to have a secure lid to keep fish safe. Also, make sure you are prepared for the effort of caring for additional pets.

Foraging Toys

These are toys that must be manipulated for your cat to obtain a food reward. A couple of examples are the "Kitty Kong" and the food distributor ball from www.SlimCat.com. Unfortunately, there are not many styles of foraging toys for cats available at most retail pet outlets. You can make your own foraging toys by using small plastic household containers and cutting out holes that are slightly larger than the size of the food/treats that you will put inside. Another homemade variation would be a shoebox with holes cut out about the size of a ping pong ball and then fill with treats and a few ping pong balls as an "obstacle". Be sure to tape the lid on. We have a variety of foraging toys available at Paws Whiskers & Claws.

Hunting

In addition to foraging, satisfy your cat's prey drive, by hiding treats or food around the house, in places your cat frequents such as: on top of their scratching post, cat condos, window seats or anywhere you know they will seek it out or stumble upon it.

Interactive Toys

These are toys that allow you and your cat to play together and often provide great exercise for your cat. Laser pointers, available at most office supply stores and some department stores like Target, range in price from \$6-\$20. The Feline Flyer is a feather toy that mimics a bird and the Dragonfly is a toy on a wire creating erratic movement. Both of these toys are available at Paws Whiskers & Claws. A good old fashion piece of string works great too-just make sure to always put it away when playtime is over. If ingested, string or ribbon can cause an intestinal obstruction which is very dangerous.

Keepin' It Fresh

While cats don't like drastic changes to their routine or environment, subtle changes can be good. Moving the furniture around or changing a cat condo from one window to another can be stimulating and create interest instead of stress.

Light-up Laser Balls

Just like the chirping fuzzy mice and birds above, there are many different motion activated balls that provide hours of entertainment for cats by flashing when touched or rolled.

Motorized Toys

There are many motorized toys available on the market. The Panic Mouse has been previously featured in *Catnip* magazine as "Best Motorized Toy" of the year. It is "...an electronic mouse that randomly waves a wand and attached spider toy through the air for your cat to chase and grab, mimicking a human waving a wand toy. The wand moves in different directions and at different speeds, sometimes pausing. It is also height and speed adjustable." The Panic Mouse as well as other great motorized toys can be ordered at www.PanicMouseInc.com or by calling 951-506-3643 and costs approximately \$30.00. At Paws Whiskers & Claws we offer the Fling-ama-string, hours of automatic fun for your feline friend. Remember your cat should always be supervised during play-do not leave these toys turned on when you are not home.

Nature Videos

Some cats enjoy watching television, especially if it's geared for them. They'll love the sounds and sights of nature videos or try leaving the television tuned to Animal Planet. There are also videos produced for cats that feature aquariums, birds and squirrels. You can purchase our "Kitty Cat TV" DVD for about \$20 or check the ads in the back of "Cats" or "Cat Fancy" magazines.

Nightlights

Cats cannot see in the dark, however cats can see well in about 1/8th of the light required by a human. This is why cats are most active and hunt at dawn and dusk. This lighting can be mimicked at home by placing nightlights by food, litterbox or sleeping areas. This will benefit all cats, particularly those who are geriatric, and it may also decrease intercat aggression.

Old Standbys

Cats love investigating things like cardboard boxes, paper bags, newspaper tents and cardboard rolls from paper towels or toilet paper. You can also try putting toys or treats inside the cardboard rolls thus turning them into foraging toys.

Outdoor Enclosures

Even indoor cats can enjoy the outdoors safely through screened in porches, screened in decks, window seats, chain link enclosures (www.HabitatHaven.com) or Kitty Walks (877-548-8905 or www.KittyWalkSystems.com). The most important thing is to ensure that the enclosure is secure, covered on all four sides and has a roof or ceiling so that cats can't escape. The Purrfect Fence (www.PurrfectFence.com) does not have a roof but does offer a secure "Houdini-Proof" arch that prevents cats from being able to scale the fence. If you allow your cats outdoor time in an enclosure or on a leash and harness, make sure your cats are current on vaccines, flea control and are dewormed regularly.

Ping-Pong Balls

Try putting 2 or more ping-pong balls in a bathtub. Cats will love jumping in and batting them around. This can be a bit noisy, so if the bathtub is near your bedroom, make sure to take them out before you go to sleep.

Training

Contrary to popular belief, cats can be trained to sit, come and do tricks on command, even walk on a leash and harness. Treat training is recommended for cats. Much like their canine counterparts, training your cat stimulates the brain, gives them a job to do and gives them a more enriched life. A good reference book is "*Training Your Cat*" by Dr. Kersti Seksel.

Water Fun

Place small wind up toys in a sink filled with water; also try any items that float like ping-pong balls, or a large bright marble so they have to "go fishing" for it. You can find wind up toys in the infant bath section of toy or department stores.