



What do cats need for good welfare?

Physical Health

Good **physical health** means disease prevention and treatment, safe housing, good nutrition, and a clean living environment. Learn more about meeting your cat's physical welfare needs.

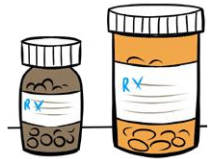
For ideal health, cats need routine preventative care, which may include things like annual vaccines and a yearly wellness check.

TIP:

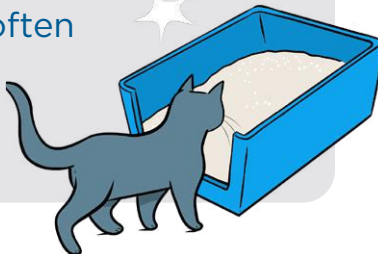
Senior cats (nine years of age+) could require more frequent visits to the veterinarian, so keep an extra eye out for changes in your cat's health as they get older.



If your cat requires medication, stick to what your veterinarian has prescribed. Human medications, or those intended for other animals, can be harmful.



Cats are happier mentally and physically when they have a clean place to use the bathroom. Scoop litter boxes daily or as often as possible.



Just like us, cats are affected by extreme temperatures and changes in the weather.

Providing your cat with shelter and warm bedding during the cold, and shade and hydration during the heat, is very important.



Cats have unique dietary needs, so feed your cat food that is made for cats. Their food will taste better and they will stay healthier if their food and water dishes are clean.

FACT: Pet dishes are a common source of bacteria.





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Cognitive Health

Cats are intelligent and curious animals that are happier and healthier when their environment is stimulating. Physical and mental exercises and activities for your cat will provide positive and new experiences to promote a **healthy feline mind**.

Let your cat explore its surroundings and people. Offer your hand to give them the option to approach for petting, and ask strangers to do the same when they interact with your cat. Allow your cat private time in areas of your home where they feel safe and encourage them with patience and kindness to emerge.



TIP:

Senior cats (nine years of age+) could require more frequent visits to the veterinarian, so keep an extra eye out for changes in your cats health as they get older.

Provide opportunities that stimulate your cat's mind. Teach them new behaviors or give your cat something new to interact with, like a

new type of toy, a cat-friendly scent, or different types of cat food.



Because humans control many aspects of the lives of cats (as with other domesticated pets) try allowing your cat to have control over their environment to develop confidence. Instead of forcing your cat into their carrier, teach your cat to enter and exit the carrier on their own. This helps your cat associate the carrier with rewards, which can make the carrier a safe location for them.



When cats hunt, they naturally eat small meals. To promote this in the home, provide enrichment like food puzzles or hidden treats so the cat can utilize their natural senses to find them. You can also promote choice by providing different types of food for your cat to pick from.





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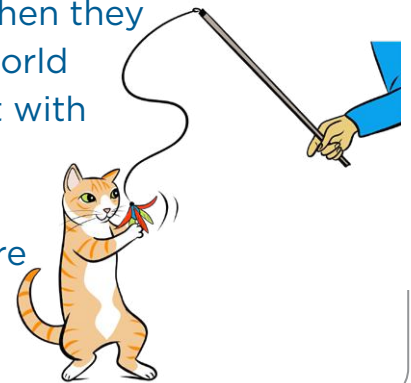
Skills for Life

For the most rewarding life possible when living with a human companion, help your cat develop **skills** that help them behave well and cope with some of the challenges they may experience living with humans.

Handle your cat gently and gradually get them used to being brushed and having their paws handled. Pair these activities with treats your cat really likes. NEVER force your cat to be handled in ways they don't like.



Give kittens positive interactions with different people! This is an important time when they learn about the world and building trust with humans. Gentle touch, play with toys, and treats are all great ways to socialize kittens.



GREAT JOB!
HERE'S A
TREAT!



Reward good behaviors you want to see more of (like using the scratching post or entering/exiting the carrier on their own)! Clicker training is a great way to train cats.

Leave your cat's carrier out all the time, rather than only bringing it out for veterinary visits. Place treats and bedding in it so they learn it is a safe space.



Never punish your cat for unwanted behaviors. If you are experiencing challenges with your cat, talk to your veterinarian and ask for a referral to a behavior specialist.



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Social Experiences

Cat behavior is highly individual. It depends on the **social experiences** that cat receives throughout their life. To set cats up for success, consider the following tips.

Consistent, friendly human-cat interactions can lead to the development of strong bonds between the caregiver and cat.



When kittens are young, especially between two to eight weeks of age, aim for at least 40 minutes of positive social interaction per day provided by multiple people. Introduce kittens to other animal housemates at this time.



Consider the individual social needs of each cat. Some cats prefer more human interaction than other cats. Some house cats are stressed living with other cats while other house cats are stressed living without other cats.



Cats have different preferences for social interaction. Try petting, brushing, talking, or playing with your cat and see how they respond.





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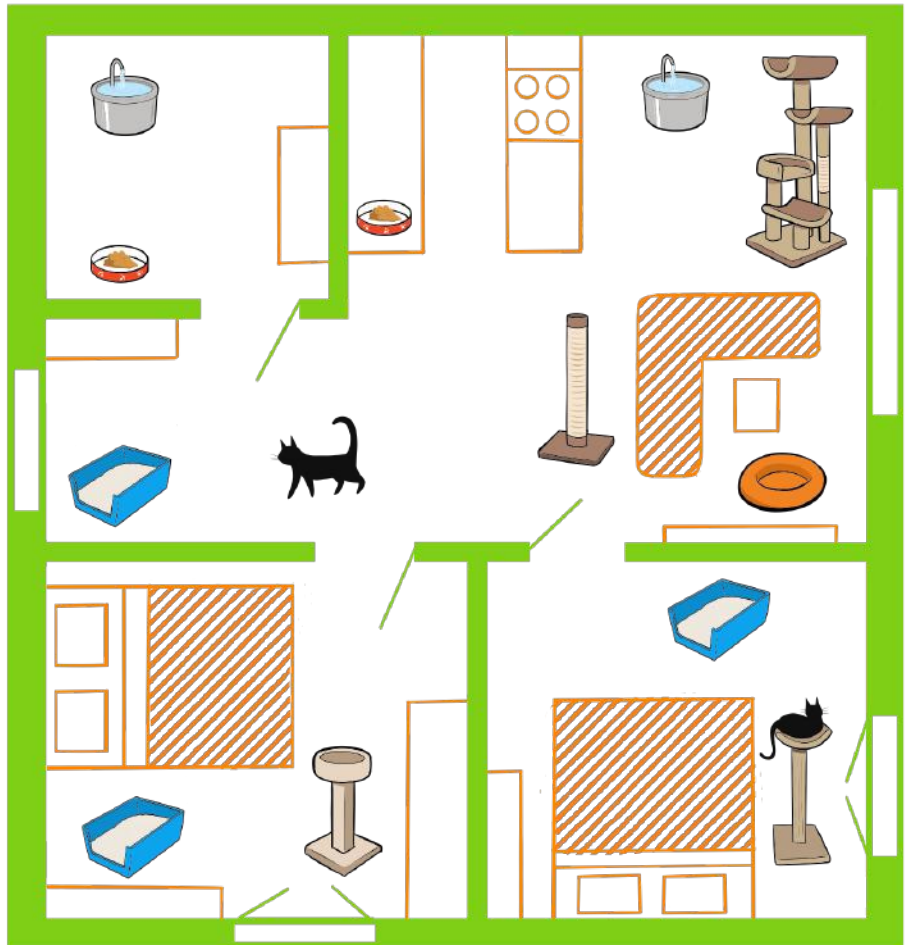
Environmental Needs

Provide at least as many food and water dishes, beds, and litter boxes as the number of cats you have. (Ideally, plus one extra!)

Give your cat multiple scratching options in different locations.

Cats love to be up high! Provide your cat with vertical space, such as cat trees and shelving.

Cats are not necessarily social eaters with other cats, so be sure to separate their food dishes if you have more than one.



Spread your cat's things out around the house: it's their home too! Separate litter boxes from food, water, and resting areas. Cats also need safe, quiet places to rest or hide.

Don't Forget!

Cats have a very sensitive sense of smell. Avoid the use of heavy or artificial scents.





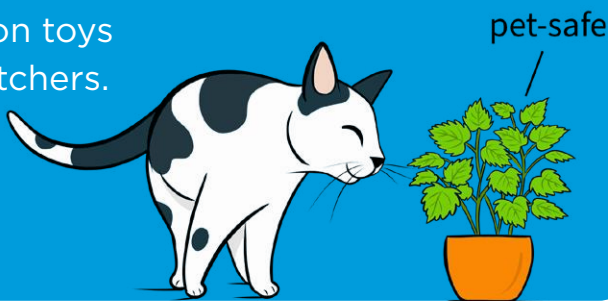
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Five Senses

Cats need to have the opportunity to engage their **five senses**. Provide a rotation of different items within each sensory category to keep the environment interesting for your cat.

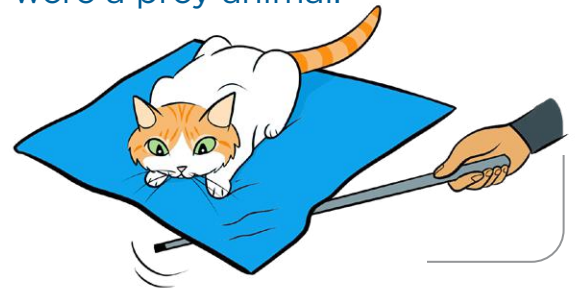
SMELL — Try Interesting Scents

Most cats react to the plants catnip and silver vine. Offer these where your cat spends time and on different objects, such as on toys and scratchers.



SIGHT — Move Their Toys

Cats prefer to watch objects move quickly along the ground. Move their toys as if the toy were a prey animal.



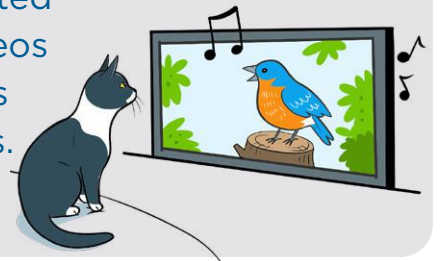
TOUCH — Provide Tactile Stimulation

Ensure access to objects with different textures. Provide items like tissue paper, cardboard, various bedding materials, and self grooming combs.



HEARING — Try CatTV

Cats have a broad hearing range that, along with their sense of sight, can be stimulated by playing videos of prey animals making sounds.



TASTE — Identify Preferred Treats

Find foods your cat likes. Offer a variety of cat treats and see what your cat eats most readily. You can use these preferred rewards for training and in food puzzles.