



Resolving Litterbox Issues

Some cats may begin to avoid the litterbox when first entering a new home or for reasons that may seem unknown! Dealing with litterbox avoidance and elimination issues can be stressful, so here are some tips on helping your cat become comfortable and confident with using their litterbox.

Tip #1: Rule out any medical issues

Some cats may develop litterbox aversion, which happens when urination or defecation becomes painful and the cat begins to associate the litterbox with that discomfort. Discuss litterbox aversion with your veterinarian so you can make sure your cat isn't in pain when using the litterbox.

Tip #2: Add litterboxes

The general rule for cats is to have one more litterbox than the number of cats. For a single cat, this would mean having two litterboxes preferably in different locations. This is especially useful for cats who are new to the home and still learning where to find the litterbox.

Tip #3: Keep the litterbox clean

Many cats prefer their bathroom to be completely clean! In addition to adding more litterboxes, make sure to scoop your cat's boxes twice a day. Products like self-cleaning boxes or the Litter Genie can make keeping the box clean much easier!

Tip #4: Try different boxes and litters

Some cats have preferences on the way their litterbox is set up. Try covering or uncovering your box, removing liners, or putting out low-sided, top-entering, or high-sided boxes. Try different litters...pellets, silicone, clay, walnut, puppy pads, etc. You can also add litter box attractants to the box, just make sure to avoid anything with strong odors that may bother their noses.

Tip #5: Treat the area they have eliminated on

Your average cleaner won't break apart the strong smell of ammonia that is found in cat urine. Even if you can no longer smell it, your cat can and will associate that spot with urination. Make sure to treat all areas where a cat has urinated inappropriately with an enzymatic cleaner. Follow instructions carefully and treat multiple times as needed.

You can also make the area that they choose to eliminate undesirable. Place a fan near the area, add double-sided tape or aluminum foil, or spray a scent that cats dislike such as citrus scents or vinegar. If your cat likes to urinate on clothing or things left on the floor, take care to put those things up where the cat cannot reach them.

Tip #6: Try different locations

Cats like their litterbox to be located in a calm and quiet location. If their litterbox is in a high-traffic area, try adding another box to a different room or on another floor of the home.

Tip #7: Reduce stress in multi-cat households

Cats may eliminate outside the litter box if other cats are creating territorial stress around it. Adding other litterboxes in different areas should assist with this issue, but taking steps to reduce overall stress in the household will also help. Make sure cats are not fighting over resources, exhibiting boredom behaviors, and have lots of vertical space to escape each other if needed will reduce overall stress between cats.

Tip #8: Make sure medications aren't resulting in increased elimination

If your cat is on any medications, consult with your veterinarian to help determine if these could be causing increased urination, constipation, or issues related to elimination that could be creating issues with the litterbox.

Tip #9: Consult with a veterinary behaviorist

If you believe that your cat's litter box issues are the result of behavioral concerns, anxiety disorders, or litterbox aversion, reach out to a board-certified veterinary behaviorist to consult on how to help your cat feel more comfortable in their litter box.

