

Behavior and Training

Litterbox Training Your Cat

- Cats are usually easy to litterbox train because they prefer to bury their waste.
- Cats may refuse to use the litterbox if something about it is unappealing.
- If you are having trouble litterbox training your cat, let your veterinarian know.

Basic Training

Cats are usually easy to litterbox train because they are naturally clean and prefer to bury their waste. First, make sure that your cat knows where the litterbox is. Confine your cat to a small area or room with clean water, fresh food, and a clean litterbox until he or she is successfully using the litterbox and seems comfortable. Do not use a covered litterbox during the training period because it might complicate the process. If your cat urinates or defecates outside the litterbox, place the waste in the litterbox; the smell should help your cat find and use the litterbox in the future. If your cat isn't using the litterbox after a day or two, do the following: After your cat eats, place him or her in the litterbox, and briefly scratch the litter with your finger. However, don't force your cat

Cleanup

Do not clean up your cat's "accidents" with an ammonia-based cleanser. Because urine contains ammonia, cleaning with an ammonia-based product could tempt your cat to urinate in the same spot again. Instead, use a product specifically for cleaning pet accidents.

to stay in the litterbox; you don't want your cat to have a negative experience in the litterbox.

Reasons a Cat Won't Use the Litterbox

Cats may refuse to use the litterbox if something about it is unappealing. If your cat won't use the litterbox, try addressing the following bulleted list, but do not punish your cat. He or she may have a medical or behavior problem that your veterinarian can address.

- The type of litter is unappealing. Most cats prefer an unscented, scoopable (sandlike) litter. Many owners also prefer scoopable litters because they control odors and absorb liquid (clump) well.
- The litterbox location is unappealing. Most cats prefer a quiet place with several escape routes. Keep your cat's food dishes as far as possible from the litterbox.
- The litterbox is dirty. Scoop it out at least twice daily, add new litter as needed, and wash the box with baking soda or an unscented soap and fill it with clean litter once a week.
- The litterbox is too small.
- The litterbox has a liner or hood, which some cats dislike.
- The litterbox isn't easily accessible.
- There aren't enough litterboxes. Provide one litterbox per cat, plus one extra box.
- There's too much litter in the litterbox. Most cats prefer the litter to be 1 to 2 inches deep.

If you are having trouble litterbox training your cat, let your veterinarian know.