



**KEEPING KITTY HAPPY!**

**ULTIMATE GUIDE TO  
INDOOR CAT ENRICHMENT**

Understand their behavior,  
make the most of your space  
and let kitty thrive!

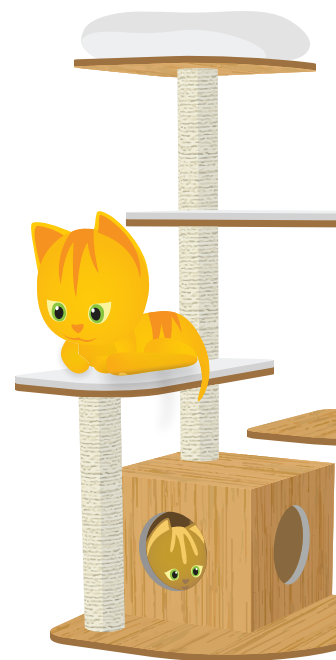
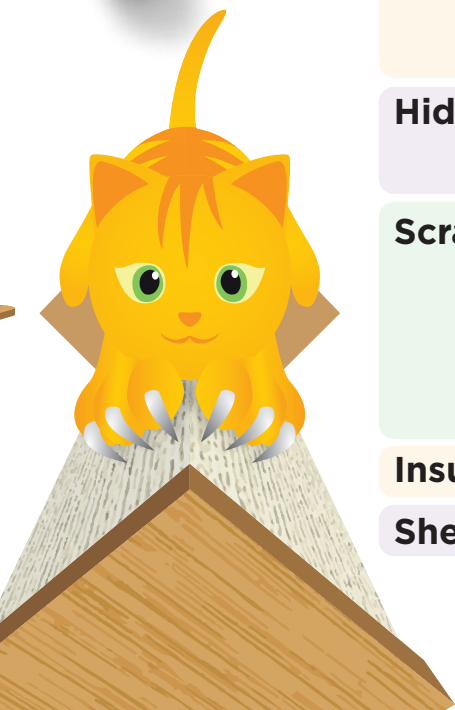


scratch • play • hide • climb + more!

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This guide aims to be the most comprehensive resource on indoor cat enrichment out there! All product and company recommendations (except Cat Amazing) are made without influence or compensation.

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# KEEPING KITTY HAPPY: INTRODUCTION



Cats are supremely intelligent, curious, adventurous and active creatures that require mental and physical stimulation to thrive!

When inviting a cat to live in our home it's our responsibility to provide them with a stimulating environment - one that engages their minds and bodies to relieve mental and physical energy, as well as satisfy their need for independent-time. This guide provides a complete overview of cat enrichment. All product recommendations are based purely on research and experience, without compensation of any kind.

## their SETTING UP ~~YOUR~~ SPACE

To set up your space for a cat you have to **think like a cat**. That means three things:



1

Think of places to **PLAY, CLIMB, SCRATCH & HIDE** - these are a housecat's main occupations - and the categories by which this guide is organized.

2

Think **MULTI-SENSORY** - cats experience their world through smell, sound and touch much more than we do, so you have to give the stimulation of these senses much more attention.

3

Think **VERTICALLY** - cats are natural climbers and appreciate vertical space as much as horizontal - and climbing opportunities make a small space feel much more spacious!

**BONUS!**

Recognize that it's now their space. All of it. Nowhere is off-limits, not even that one area you'd really rather not have covered in cat hair. In fact, especially not that one.



# KEEPING KITTY HAPPY: PLAY



In the wild, we cats rely on our speed, stealth, cleverness and cunning for our very survival. In your home, we have to be able to express these instincts to stay happy, healthy and well-behaved!

## PLAY BEHAVIOR

The best toys mimic cats' most natural instinctive activity - **hunting!** Hunting involves two primary behaviors:

1

**STALKING & CHASING** - when potential prey is spotted, the cat gets low to the ground and creeps toward it trying to remain undetected. Once the cat believes it is within striking distance, or if they prey notices and bolts, the cat will give chase at full speed.



in the wild



in your house

2

**TRAPPING & CATCHING** - if prey is cornered in a shed or under some branches, the cat will diligently root around, scratch, sniff, pounce, reach and retrieve.



in the wild



in your house

Next, let's look at the toys for each type of behavior...

# 1

## STALKING & CHASING TOYS

There are countless simple toys that get kitty moving. Here are some of our favorites!



crinkle ball

irresistible crunch & ultra lightweight



wiggly ball by Dezi & Roo

bouncy superball + lifelike tail = mayhem!

jingly ball

rolls and jingles, great for kittens



spring

bounces and spins for long-range chase

We rely greatly on our senses of smell and sound, so consider toys that stimulate our nose and ears as well! Toys that squeak, scratch and crinkle, and those with a scent (think catnip!) are sure to be a hit!



yeoww! catnip banana

works the teeth and hind legs at the same time!

*chewer!*  
if kitty is gnawing through your catnip toys - try hemp!



hemp catnip mouse

natural, safe and stronger than cotton



### SAFETY TIP!

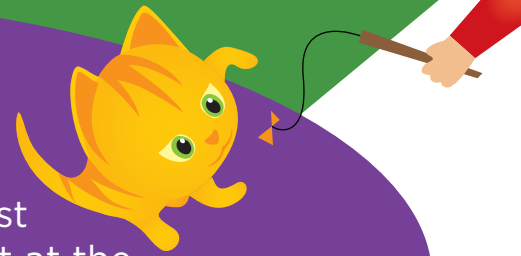
Look for durable toys made with organic materials and dyes. Avoid small detachable parts (googly eyes, glued-on strings, etc.) or remove them after purchase.



**FETCH!**

Is your cat a dog? Throw a small toy or treat just over kitty's head from a distance - they might just run after it and bring it back! Who says dogs have all the fun?

## A WORD ON WANDS



When it comes to stalking and chasing, the wand is probably the most archetypal cat toy – a stick with a string & bait at the end. These are absolutely indispensable for active play, and will be the centerpiece of active bonding time with your kitty. There are countless wands to pick from – here are some important tips to help you find the right one.

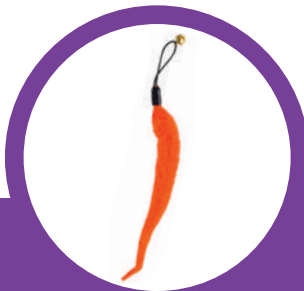


Non-foam handle - foam can be chewed to pieces & swallowed. Wood, rubber or plastic are good options.

Retractable rod is great for storage - just beware of cheap metal that breaks easily. Fiberglass is a good flexible option.



Many wands have metal fittings and swivels at the end near the bait. This is dangerous and there are many reports of broken teeth and nails. Avoid metal fittings as much as possible.



**REMEMBER TO ROTATE ATTACHMENTS TO KEEP THE CHASE FRESH!**



### SAFETY TIP!

Take care with long strings – the proverbial ‘ball of yarn’ – do not leave them unattended around cats. And mind that they don’t eat the prize!

# LASER POINTERS

Nothing is more iconic than sending a cat berserk in pursuit of the elusive Red Dot – without you even getting up off the couch.

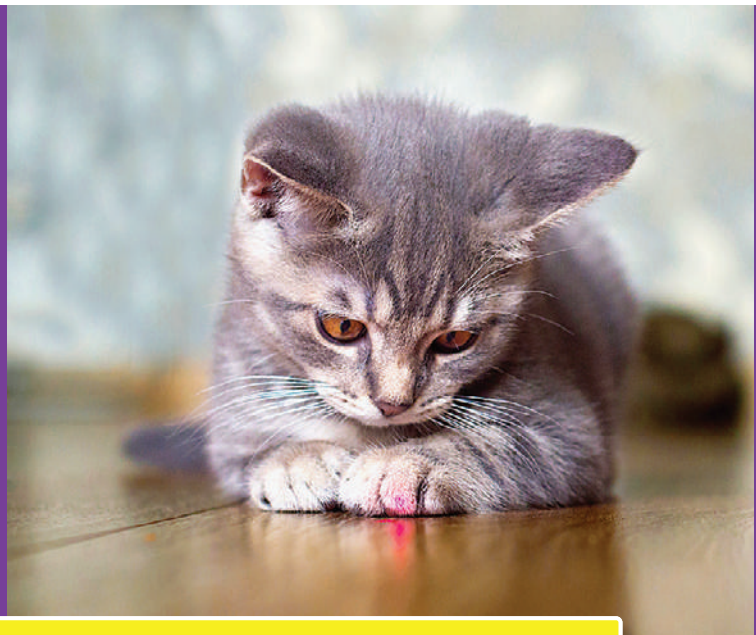
***But is it good for your cat?***



While lasers can certainly let kitty blow off a lot of energy with minimal effort, experts disagree on whether it's actually a good idea.

Laser pointers offer a challenge without a tangible reward at the end of the chase. This can confuse and frustrate your cat and leave them unfulfilled with the play.

We recommend a conservative approach – grab it in a pinch to get some energy out, but use it sparingly and mix it in with other types of play.



## **SAFETY TIP!**

Take great care never to shine the laser into the eye area, and be mindful of unintended reflection from mirrors, glass and polished floors. Automated laser toys should be avoided for this reason.



**WIN-WIN!**

Have the red dot land on a treat so the chase yields a tangible & yummy prize in the end!

## PUZZLE FEEDERS

Food is a powerful motivator. Puzzle feeders turn snacking into a game – getting their paws moving and their gears spinning!

Look for puzzle feeders that offer a variety of challenges and multiple difficulty levels to keep your cat engaged as their skills improve!



Puzzle feeders aren't just fantastic enrichment – they also slow down eating, making them highly recommended by veterinarians for weight management and digestive health.



treat ball



another way to get them moving for their snack!



hunting mouse

indoor feeding system by Doc & Phoebe



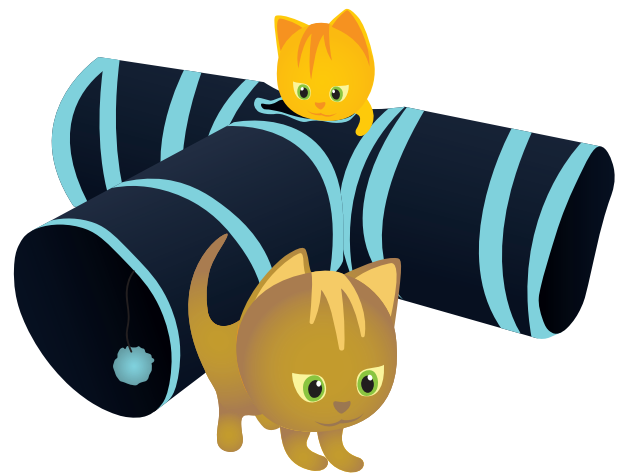
HUNT!

Make it personal – put a treat on the edge of a hole for kitty to knock inside with his nose – now it's on!



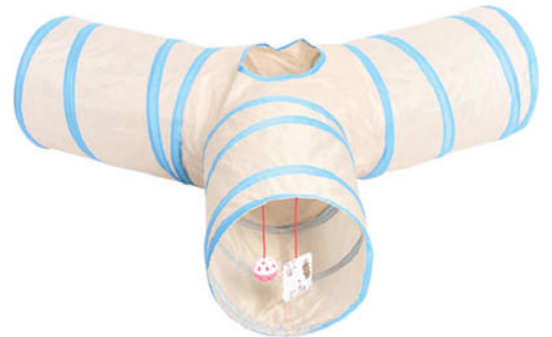
## TUNNELS

Tunnels are a feline favorite – providing mystery and unpredictability as well as an opportunity to pursue “prey” into a “burrow”. It’s also the perfect place to stage an ambush on an unsuspecting passer-by!



### Hide and Sneak by Dezi & Roo

provides an irresistible rustle and lets in just enough light through the material to see shadows moving on the other side



### nylon tunnels

durable and collapsible – just be sure to check dimensions when ordering online, as sometimes they’re smaller than they look in the pictures

## PLAY MATS

A playmat is a versatile item where cats can play with abandon – and the king of the playmats is undoubtedly the Ripple Rug by Snugglycat. Durable, washable (air dry!), made from recycled materials and infinitely reconfigurable into new peaks and valleys for fresh adventure every time. Throw some treats or a catnip toy inside for a foraging frenzy! Outside of our own products, this is the one we recommend most often!

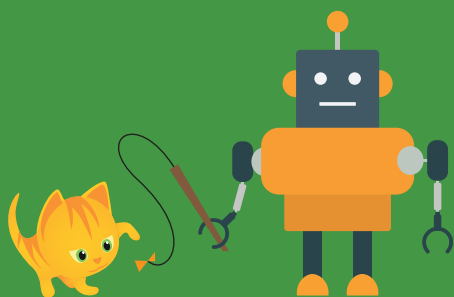


**CATCH!**

Take a stick and move it under the mat – all kitty’s instincts will immediately kick into high gear. They’ll also be able to sink their teeth and nails into the mat with full force to relieve a lot of energy quickly!

# ELECTRONIC TOYS

Recent years have seen a flood of electronic toys and gadgets on the market. Although these might seem like an easy way to delegate enrichment to a robot, they generally don't live up to the hype.



Realistic motion is very hard to mimic – so these gadgets typically have highly repetitive movements that get boring quickly – and unrealistic compared to a truly erratic target like a wand or spring. Moreover, the mechanisms that create the motion tend to be very loud and end up frightening cats as often as amusing them.

So while you may be excited to receive the latest gizmo in the mail, and it might briefly amuse a brave kitten, most cats will typically lose interest quickly – and leave you wondering what to do with a pricey hunk of mechanized plastic.

Our recommendation is to avoid the temptation of robo-nannies for now and watch this space for anything new to emerge. But as with everything, there are **a few exceptions...**



## flappy fish

a realistic-looking catnip-infused fish sporting a flapping tail for a more convincing catch!



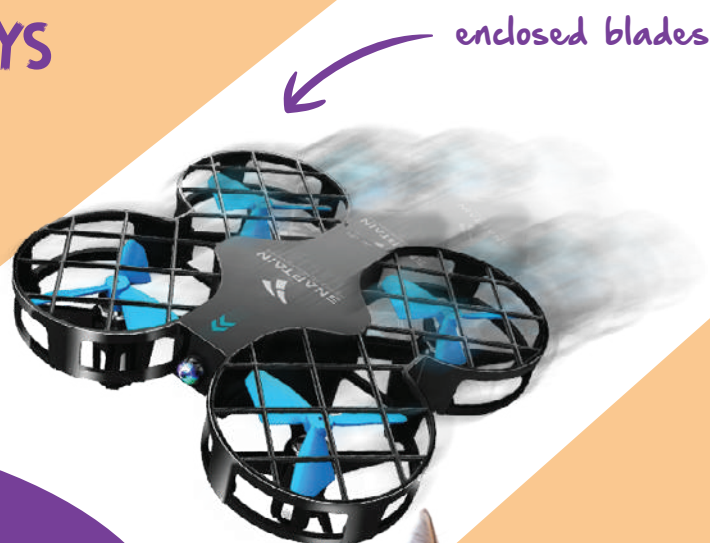
## hexbug nano

these vibrating critters mimic insect motion to an uncanny degree. Put a couple inside a paper bag and watch the hunter activate!

## REMOTE CONTROLLED (RC) TOYS

Most RC toys fall into the category of loud & boring – but this is rapidly evolving space is definitely one to watch. One recent development is the proliferation of inexpensive quadcopter drones – which can take play to the air!

Whether a drone will get your cat jumping to sky or bolting under the couch will depend on their personality. If you want to experiment, as of this writing the Snaptain H823H is a great option. It's small, reasonably priced, fairly easy to control and features enclosed blades to protect paws and survive the inevitable crashes.



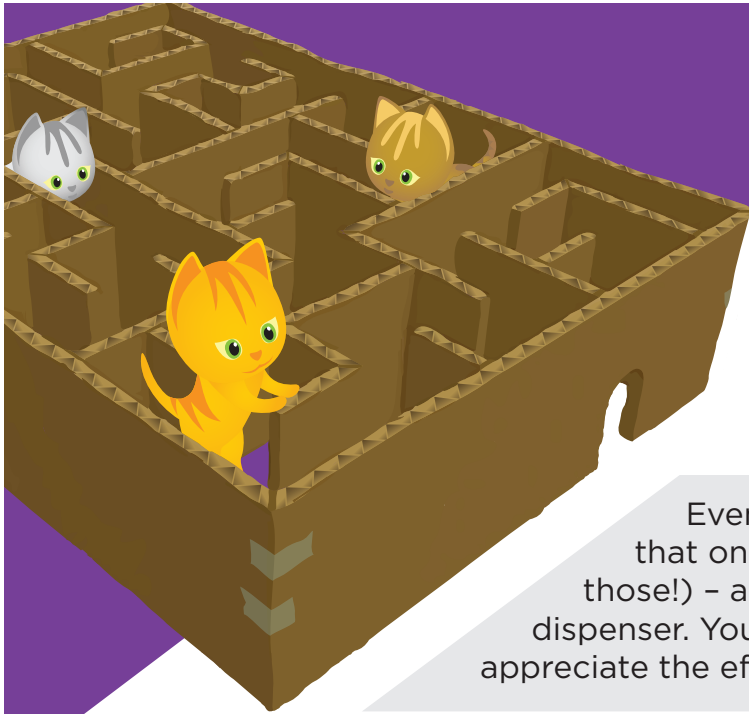
## SCREEN TIME

Battling screen addiction? Get your cat involved! There's a great deal of content made specifically for cats – just search YouTube for “cat TV” and you'll find plenty of videos of nature scenes with wildlife for your kitty to gawk at.

There are even apps & games made specifically for cats, and some of them can be quite engaging, with life-like responsive animations and tactile feedback! They are very low-cost to try out and won't have you shelling out for a specialized gadget.



## DIY TOYS



Finally, a word must be said for going DIY. Whether it's a piece of scrunched up newspaper tied to a string, a ball of tin foil, a shipping box with holes in it, or an all-out cardboard cat maze - there are plenty of ways to experiment!

Even an old towel can double as a Ripple Rug while that one arrives in the mail (seriously - get one of those!) - and a toilet paper tube can become a rolling treat dispenser. You'll have fun being creative and your cat will appreciate the effort and attention.



For inspiration, search YouTube for DIY & home-made cat toys to find everything from cardboard mazes to home-made treat puzzles to custom electronic & 3D printed creations!

*Photo credits: www.foodpuzzlesforcats.com*



## YOU-TIME!


Although so far we've focused on stuff you can get for your cat - but the reality is that the most important thing is doing stuff with your cat! Nothing can substitute companionship.



Many of the products we've discussed will engage cats in solo play - and give you a few precious moments of peace - however, you should always consider how the things you get will enhance your time together. And remember - the more play during the day the more sleep for you at night! (Or so the theory goes...)


**RESOURCE!**

FoodPuzzlesForCats.com is another great resource with a gallery of creative toys from everyday objects.




Having plenty of toys around not only helps create an enriching environment, it will also help us bond when spending time together – and keep us happily playing on our own too!


## ADDITIONAL TIPS!



**AGE-RIGHT** – if you notice your cats stop playing with an old favorite, try putting it away for a few days to see if interest returns. If it doesn't, there's a good chance kitty has outgrown the toy! But don't toss it yet – sometimes, toys can be combined! For example, if your kitty is no longer into batting around a stuffed mouse or ball, you can place them inside a puzzle toy to reignite their interest!



**PERSONALITY FIT** – cats can be as varied in their personalities as people, and that extends to the toys and type of play they prefer. Some may prefer more chasing and pouncing, others will prefer methodical digging and searching. Try a variety of toys to see which types your cat gravitates to most.



**PLAY TIME** – interactive play is a key part of enrichment for cats and one of the most important factors to happiness and well-adjustment in their home. Try to play with your cat for at least 15 minutes every day - and provide plenty of toys they can play with on their own as well!



PSST!

**Safety first!** When introducing a new toy, always supervise the initial play to ensure that your cat is using the toy safely, and not eating it, getting stuck, or otherwise misusing it!

# KEEPING KITTY HAPPY: CLIMB & PERCH

## THINK VERTICALLY

Elevated areas make a great destination – and the journey there is good exercise. They can also vastly expand kitty’s domain, especially in tight quarters.

The first thing to do is find the ‘naturally’ elevated areas of your house and make them clear and accessible (think top of the fridge, bookcase, etc).

Flat surfaces near windows are especially valuable real estate – try to keep at least a cat-sized patch clear, and ensure the path to get there is not obstructed by anything you’d rather not find in pieces on the floor.



### window lookout

to ponder the first snowfall in winter & welcome visitors in spring!



Often kitty will want to claim a place that you didn’t anticipate, and in fact would rather have to yourself. Be prepared to surrender it (and put a little cat bed there).

The next step in expanding kitty’s vertical domain is a cat tree. There are countless options to choose from, and many in-depth articles to help you find the right one. We’ll just highlight the key things to look for when shopping for a cat tree.



PSST!

We have a very different relationship to the laws of gravity... for us, they’re more like **guidelines**.

## CAT TREE TIPS

Flat surfaces should be covered in soft non-skid materials. Fully carpeted cat trees are popular for this reason, but can be hard to clean. Removable liners are great for easy cleaning.



Materials matter: particle board & solid wood are good options, with laminate-covered MDF being most premium for aesthetics and durability. Note that untreated wood can warp with humidity.

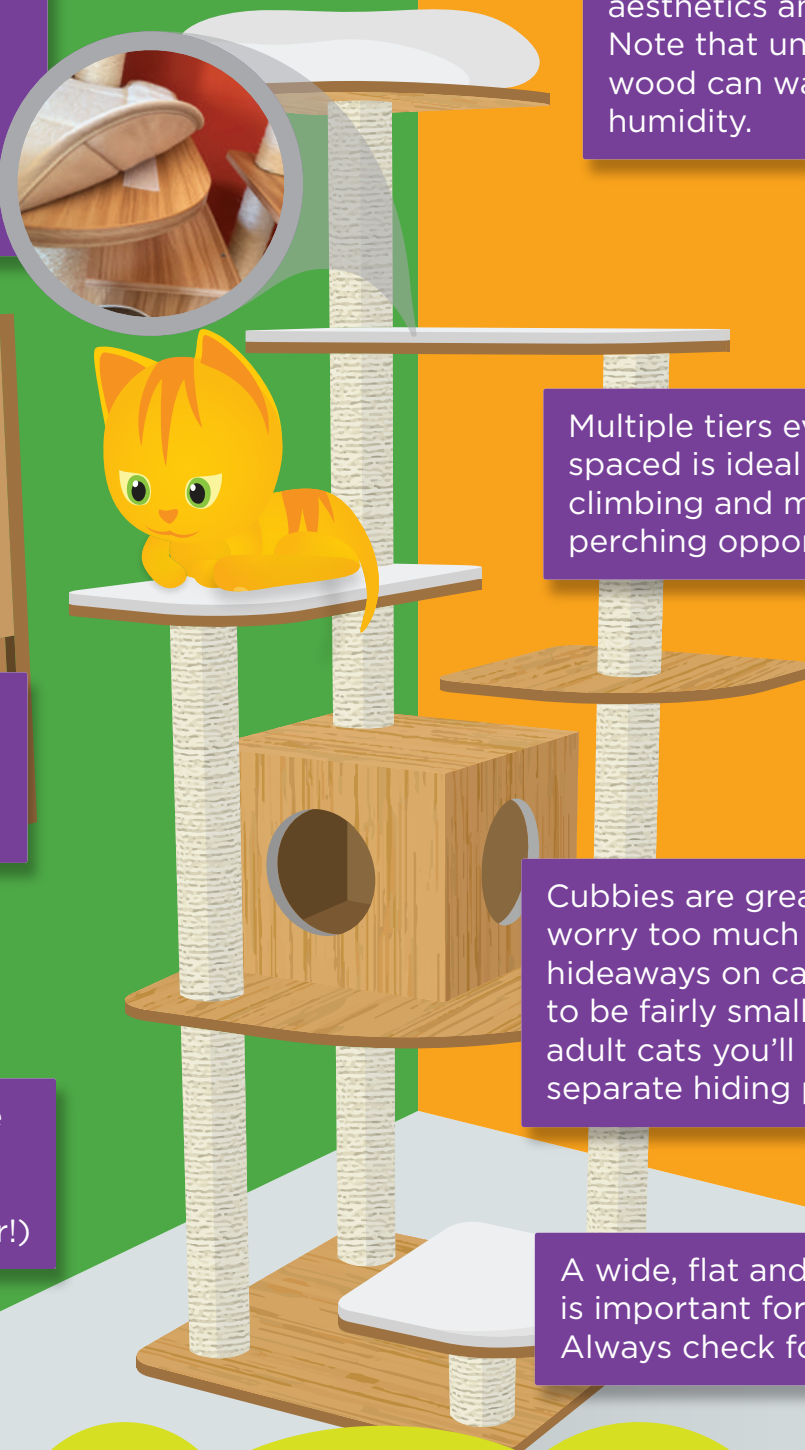
Multiple tiers evenly spaced is ideal for ease of climbing and maximum perching opportunities.

The best location for a cat tree is against a wall or in a corner for stability. Near a window is a huge bonus!

Posts covered in sisal rope to assist in climbing and providing opportunities to scratch (more on that later!)

Cubbies are great but don't worry too much about them: hideaways on cat trees tend to be fairly small and for adult cats you'll likely want a separate hiding place.

A wide, flat and sturdy base is important for stability. Always check for wobble!



**PRETTY!**

Aesthetics are important. Pick a tree that looks good in your home - you have to live with it too!

## GO ALL-OUT!

Is there such a thing as too much? Perhaps – but we haven't seen it. So if you have the opportunity, go wild! A traversable vertical habitat for kitty will be much appreciated – and will let you take your inner crazy cat lady or lad to a whole new level.



### SAFETY TIP!

If you have a senior cat or one with limited mobility due to injury or illness, take that into account. Make access to vertical spaces evenly tiered, and pick out products that your cat can easily navigate.

## FOLLOW THE SUN

Cats love direct sunlight. Notice where the rays fall during the day – your cat will surely notice too – and factor that into your perch placement. For the ultimate luxury experience, put a cat bed into the sun's path and move it throughout the day!



window perch

4pm

3pm

2pm

11am





# OUTDOOR TIME?



## THE DEBATE RAGES ON...



Custom-built catio by @catiobob

*Photo credit: Bob the Catio Builder*

Nothing satisfies the senses like being outdoors – the sounds, smells, and movement of nature can never be recreated at home. But venturing into the wild carries significant risks – including diseases, encounters with other animals, vehicles, places to get trapped or simply getting lost (and even stolen!)

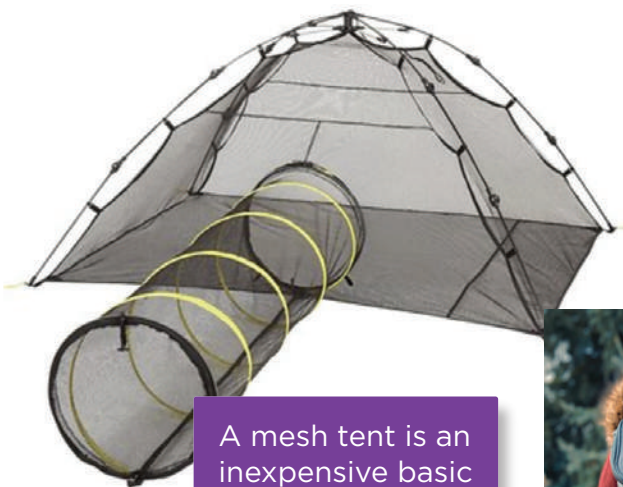
There's also the risk to wildlife to consider – domestic cats are a major threat to wild bird populations!

Fortunately, there's a happy medium embraced by many cat owners – the catio! A catio (cat + patio) is an outdoor enclosure that can be either stand-alone (for the cat to be taken in and out) or attached to the house and accessible by a window or doorway.

Catios can be simple out-of-the box kits or elaborate custom constructions – either open kitty to a whole new world of sensory experience!



Balcony catio with window access made from modified dog crate.



A mesh tent is an inexpensive basic option with the benefit of being lightweight and easy to move.

*Photo credit: Outback Jack*



### SAFETY TIP!

For stand-alone catios, remember to provide water – and shade should be available anytime the cat is outside (keep in mind the movement of the sun!)



*Photo credit: @yourcatbackpack*

## on the go!

Clear backpacks have recently become popular for taking cats on walks. How much cats enjoy these excursions varies by personality – but there's no harm in trying.

# KEEPING KITTY HAPPY: HIDE

## ALONE TIME

How often cat will want alone time will vary greatly by personality, but all cats will appreciate a private place to retreat to when they're ready for a bit of seclusion.



The perfect hiding spot is one where we can see - but not be seen!

A spacious hideaway with smart design by KittyCardboard.



There's no shortage of cat houses & hideaway to pick from, and you'll be able to find something your cat will enjoy and matching your decor. A soft liner or bed goes a long way to make the hiding spot more attractive!

*Photo credit: KittyCardboard*



Be prepared to have all your fancy housing efforts to be ignored for a cozy place in the laundry hamper or open sock drawer.



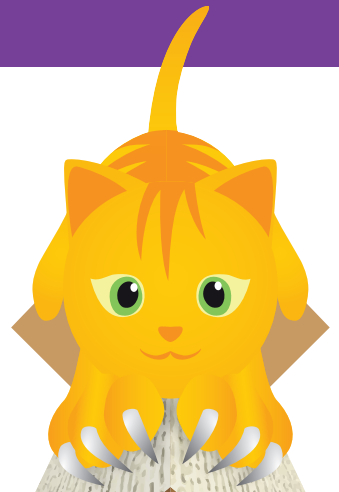
WELCOME!

To entice a cat into their designed spot, line it with a worn t-shirt that smells like you. If all else fails, tell them that the cubby is NOT for them and they should NOT, under any circumstances go in there!

# KEEPING KITTY HAPPY: SCRATCH



Cats will scratch - your couch, or your leg, or a designated scratching area - that's (partially) up to you.



## SCRATCH BEHAVIOR

Cats scratch - but why? The first step to meeting your cat's scratching needs is to understand the purpose of scratching. There are three primary reasons why cats scratch.

1

**NAIL CARE** - Scratching keeps their sameowri blades sharp and ready for battle!



2

**TERRITORY MARKING** - a strategically placed scratch lets contenders know that this space is taken.



3

**EMOTIONAL EXPRESSION** - cats can scratch to express both delight and anxiety - and it's important to know the difference.



**STOP!**

Do not declaw under any circumstances! Most people who declaw are uninformed about the permanent trauma of the procedure. Learn about it and discover humane alternatives at [pawproject.org](http://pawproject.org)

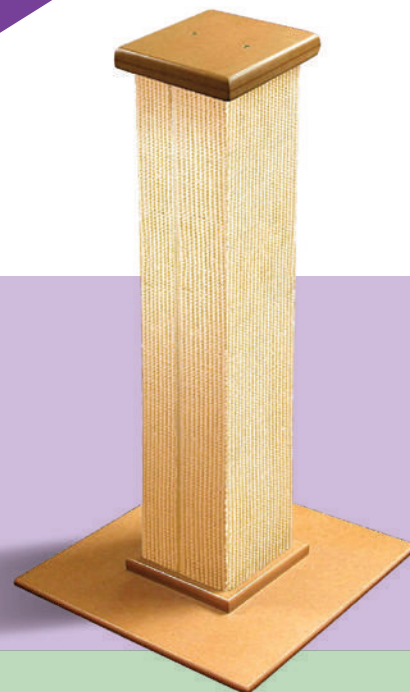
# SCRATCHERS

Invest in a dedicated place to scratch  
- or they'll dedicate one of yours!

Scratchers can be oriented vertically, horizontally or inclined - and each option scratches a different itch, so it's ideal to have one of each type available.

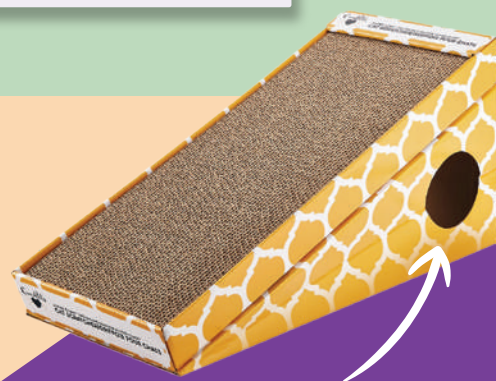
## vertical

vertical scratchers help work out limbs, most closely resemble scratching surfaces in the wild (think tree trunk)



## horizontal

horizontal scratchers are easier for older cats and offer a good place to perch



## incline

incline scratchers can sometimes offer the best of both worlds - other times they're neither here nor there.

To keep a scratcher still, try putting something heavy inside, like a large rock, to keep from sliding.



GO BIG!

When it comes to scratchers - bigger is better. A scratcher should not move - that means either the cat can put their full bodyweight on it, or it's heavy enough on its own not to move around. It should also be big enough to enable the maximum stretch - so always go for the biggest scratcher possible.

# SCRATCHER MATERIALS

Scratcher materials also vary, and you might need to experiment to find out which your cat prefers.



## Sisal rope

Common material on cat tree posts – and for good reason. Cats love to sink their claws into it. Will become frayed over time so be sure to rotate the presented surface regularly.



## woven sisal

A durable and excellent scratch material often found on premium scratchers. A woven sisal scratcher is sure to be a favorite.



## corrugated cardboard

It's no secret cats love cardboard – it's a great scratch! They wear out fast, so be sure to replace them often, and get a big one to compensate for their light weight.



## carpet

Although a common material on cat trees, carpet can be hit or miss depending on the cat – and the carpet. Look for short looping fibers that provide resistance to the claws!

Try out scratchers of different types and see which kind your cat prefers – and have a few options around your house for easy access and territory marking. Place scratchers strategically near areas you would rather not have scratched to offer a ready alternative for redirection.



**CATNIP!**

Use catnip to attract to the desired scratching area - rub it right into the surface and watch the claws sink in!

# KEEPING KITTY HAPPY: CONCLUSION

## INSUFFICIENT ENRICHMENT

Be on the lookout for common signs of boredom and lack of enrichment:



★ Scratching a place they know they shouldn't (often followed by looking at you) - they want your attention.

★ Chasing their own tail (except in very young kittens).

★ Excessive grooming, especially until raw patch - this can be sign of distress and boredom, or a more serious condition.

★ Maniacal running around - this typically indicates excess energy.

★ Excess time spent sleeping - it's a common myth that cats sleep all day.

★ Over-eating - eating to relive boredom is common in cats like it is in humans.

★ Aggressive behavior toward you or other pets.

★ Vocalization - especially low guttural 'forlorn' sounds.

★ Clingy behavior - always seeking your attention and being by your side.



### SAFETY TIP!

The behaviors above may also be signs of underlying medical conditions, so consult with your veterinarian if adding enrichment does not alleviate these symptoms.

## SHELTER & RESCUE ENRICHMENT



Shelter cats are especially in need of enrichment. It not only alleviates boredom but helps them socialize and regulate their behavior as they await adoption into their forever homes.



The Cat Amazing Shelter & Rescue Enrichment Program provides free toys to shelters, rescues and large fosters across the US. If you work or volunteer at a shelter or rescue you can learn more and sign up your organization at [www.catamazing.com/enrichment](http://www.catamazing.com/enrichment) to start receiving your free Enrichment Kits. And spread the word to other organizations to sign up as well.

Giving the gift of play to cats in need is a core part of Cat Amazing. A portion of every purchase from Cat Amazing goes toward maintaining and growing the Shelter & Rescue Enrichment Program.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Andrey and his wife Natalie adopted their first cat, Mooky, in 2008. Mooky struggled to stay stimulated and active in a tiny studio apartment - so he came up with a game of dropping a small red ball into a folding bookstand and fishing it out. Andrey saw Mooky playing and came up with fresh puzzles for him - and so Cat Amazing was born. Mooky named Andrey CEO (Cat Entertainment Officer) when he discovered that it was uncommon for people to do business directly with a cat. The Cat Amazing Crew has been committed to reinventing and educating about cat enrichment ever since!



**Andrey Grigoryev**  
Founder & CEO, Cat Amazing



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