

The best thing about cats is they don't need to be potty-trained. Relieving themselves in soft, loose material and burying their waste is an innate behavior, so even young kittens know what to do without being shown. All you have to do is provide an acceptable place for the cat to do his business.

Here are some suggestions to start out on the right foot with your new cat or kitten:

Where should you put the litterbox?

Put the litterbox in a place that provides the cat with some amount of privacy but that is convenient for him to get to. You might want to put the litterbox in the basement, but your cat may find the basement unacceptable. A small kitten may not be able to climb down the stairs, or the floor may be too cold to walk on. Additionally, basements house a variety of giant noise-making monsters like the furnace, washer and dryer. If a cat is frightened by the noise of one of these appliances while using his litterbox, he may not want to return to that location to go to the bathroom.

What kind of litterbox should you use?

Most cats prefer a standard plastic litterbox. If you have a kitten, make sure the sides are not too high for him to get into the box. Be careful of using covered litterboxes. While some cats prefer the privacy, they must be cleaned more frequently because the odors get trapped inside. A covered box that is not cleaned often quickly becomes unacceptable to most cats. Some cats don't mind a liner in the box, but others do. Experiment with two boxes, one with and one without the liner to see how your cat feels about them.

What kind of litter should you use?

Most cats prefer fine-grained, soft substrates for elimination, so the clumping litters or dust-free small grained clay litters are most acceptable. Usually, the pellet-type litters or those that are scented are unacceptable to cats. Find the type of litter your cat prefers by giving her a choice of two or three different litterboxes containing different litters. Once you find what type of litter he likes, stick with it. Do not put more than 2 inches of litter in the box. Cats do not like to sink into their toilet area.

How many litterboxes should you have?

If you have multiple cats, you should have multiple boxes in multiple locations in the house. A good rule of thumb is one box per cat plus one. Do not put them all in the same room, this essentially creates one toilet area, not several.

How often should you clean the litterbox?

You must keep the litterbox consistently clean to meet the needs of most cats. Scoop the feces out every day and totally change the litter at least twice a week. Do not use strong smelling cleaning products to wash out the box. The residual smell may cause your cat to avoid the box. It is sufficient to wash out the box with soap and water at each changing.

What does it mean if your cat stops using the litterbox?

The first thing to consider is taking the cat to the veterinarian. It may be a medical condition causing your cat to eliminate outside the box. If the veterinarian does not find a medical problem, consider behavioral causes. Did you recently change litter brands? Did you move the box location? Are you cleaning the box often enough? Did something scare the cat when she was using the litterbox? Is there unrest between the

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family cats? There are many reasons why cats stop using their litterboxes. Do a little detective work to try to figure out what is going on.