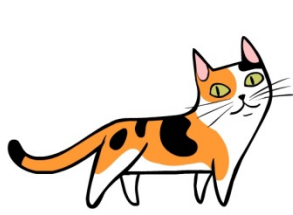


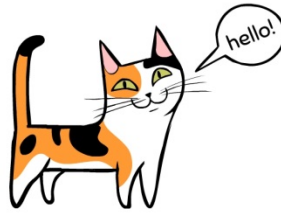


Helpful Cat Handouts for Foster Caregivers

CAT LANGUAGE



INTERESTED



FRIENDLY



ATTENTIVE



RELAXED



TRUSTING



FRIENDLY, RELAXED



CONTENT



CONFLICTED, CAUTIOUS



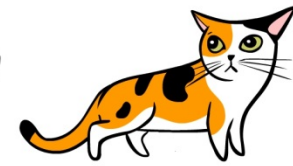
PLAYFUL



EXCITED



"THIS IS MINE"



ANXIOUS



PREDATORY



WORRIED



FRIGHTENED



THREATENED



TERRIFIED



SUPER TERRIFIED



IRRITATED



DISGUSTED



The “Scoop” on Litter Boxes

- **The rule of thumb for the number of litter boxes is: ONE PER CAT, PLUS ONE.** Extra litter boxes are necessary because some cats like to defecate in one and urinate in another. Others will not use a box that has already been used by another cat.
- **Clean the litter boxes DAILY.** The single most common reason for a cat's refusal to use a litter box is because the box is dirty. Non-clumping litter should be scooped daily and the litter box emptied and washed every few days. Clumping litter should also be scooped daily and the litter box washed when soiled.
- **Choose a litter that appeals to the cat.** Most cats prefer the texture of the sand-like scooping litters - but each cat is different and your cat may prefer a different texture. Be sure to select a brand that clumps into a firm ball, making scooping easier and cleaner. **As a health precaution for kittens that might be prone to ingest the litter, use a non-clumping litter until the kitten is four months old.**
- **Many cats prefer unscented litter.** Perfumed, chemical scents often repel cats. When you wash the litter box, use hot water and a mild dishwashing liquid. Do not use harsh chemicals that will leave a lingering odor, such as vinegar or bleach.
- **The litter box should be at least 22" x 16" for an adult cat.** Bigger is definitely better when it comes to litter boxes. Many cats find the litter box liners irritating.
- **Place litter boxes in quiet, private places.** It should be easy for your cat to get to his box and he should not have to be worried about being disturbed by children or ambushed by other pets. Noisy areas near washing machines, furnaces, or under stairs may frighten the cat away from the box. A house with several stories should have a litter box on each floor. **NEVER** place litter boxes near food and water dishes.
- **While kittens have an innate instinct to use an easily raked substance as their litter, they may also choose other, more convenient, locations.** You should limit their territory until they learn that the litter box is the only acceptable place to eliminate. Like small children, they should not be expected to travel very far to find their toilet areas.
- **When introducing a new cat into the home, initially confine the cat to one room with its litter box, bed, food and water.** When the cat has used the litter box several times and seems curious about the rest of the home, then you can let him explore.
- **Once you have decided on the placement for the litter boxes — *don't move them!***

If you have any questions regarding your cat's use of his box, please call us!



Enrichment for Your Cat!

For the safety of your new cat, and the native wildlife, the AWLA recommends that you try to keep your cat mostly indoors. In order to keep your “mostly indoor” cat happy in mind and health it is important to provide him with some enrichment. Pet owners tend to be very good at providing enrichment for their companion dogs, but often fail to see the importance of providing enrichment for their cats as well!

There are four main types of enrichment that you can provide your cat: Touch or patting, food enrichment, play enrichment, and environmental enrichment. Below we have outlined some great ideas for these types of enrichment.

Food Enrichment

Cats were designed to hunt and use their sensory abilities, including sight, hearing and their problem-solving minds. However, we bore them to bits by feeding them food which does not move and we give it to them at the same time every day in a bowl. How boring! Cats need to be challenged to keep their minds and their bodies healthy. An excellent way to do this is to use food enrichment tools. Keep in mind that not all cats will respond to food enrichment and it is best used with cats who are highly “food driven.”

- **Scatter Feeds** – This is a great way to get a cat to use its brain – it is a feeding method that is often used in zoos for the same reason. To scatter feed simply take a portion of the cat’s daily dry food and scatter it on the floor in front of the cat. Before you scatter the food, get your cat to focus on you so they can see where you place the food. Cats are attracted to movement so this will also encourage them to go for the food.
- **Kong and Activity Balls** – These are specially made food enrichment tools. They come in a variety of sizes, colors, and patterns. They work by first placing dry food inside and then as the cat rolls it around, the food falls out. You can also place wet food in some of these toys, including the Kong. Experiment with different types of foods and treats your cat will like to play with in their Kong or similar toy.
- **Bottles** – This is like a home-made Kong. All you need to do is get a used water bottle that has been completely washed and dried out with all the labels taken off. Make a few holes around the outside, large enough so the dry food kibble can fall out. You’ll need about 10 holes for beginner cats. Fill the bottle half up with dry food, put the lid on and give it to the cat.
- **Feeding pyramids** – This feeding method provides excellent mental stimulation for a cat. You can make a feeding pyramid at home, all you need are 6 empty toilet rolls (or cut off some plastic piping for an even stronger version) and some masking or sticky tape. Stack the toilet like a pyramid – three rolls to make a bottom row, two rolls for the next row and one roll on the top. Place a few dry cat food treats or a portion of the cat’s dry food in each roll. At first, place the food near the opening of each roll, then gradually push the food further in so it is more challenging for the cat to reach.



Play Enrichment

Play is a fantastic way to bond with adult cats as well as kittens. It is important stimulation and exercise for your cat and is great for releasing frustration and boredom. Play is a tool to help not only the cat but also the relationship between the cat and their human companion. In play, a relationship develops between the cat and the person, with the person entering the cat's world and following the cat's lead, helping to form a relationship of trust.

There are several homemade cat toys that you can make for your cat instead of spending a lot of money on each new toy. Here are some examples:

- **Paper Ball** – simply a piece of paper rolled up into a ball. It will be more fun for your cat if you throw it across a wooden floor or tiles. It will roll well this way.
- **Ping Pong Cat Ball** – this is simply a ping pong ball!
- **Paper Bag Toy** – find a paper shopping bag (NOT a plastic one!) and leave it open somewhere in the middle of the room. It won't take long for your cat to come over and begin to inspect the bag and then start to play around with it.
- **String Cat Toy** – all cats love to chase a bit of dangling string. The important thing to remember is never to leave a cat along with a piece of string, he could get caught up in it or choke on it.

Environmental Enrichment

- **Climbing, Heights, and Hiding** – Cats love to climb and perch up high. You can allow your cat to climb onto furniture or shelving or get specially made cat climbing equipment such as a cat scratching post. Cats love to explore their environments. Help them explore by providing access to heights. Heights can also help insecure cats feel more relaxed. Combine heights with hiding spots to provide a stimulating environment. If you have more than one cat, provide many perching areas around your home. Cats also love to hide, and if you have a number of cats in your home it is essential you provide adequate numbers of hiding places also. An easy hiding spot that you can make is made by using an empty box! Simply turn an empty box upside down and cut a "doorway" into the box. Put the box on the ground and if your cat doesn't go inside the box, get a paper ball and throw it into the box while your cat is watching. You can also make holes in the top of the box and thread string through the hole, tying a knot at each end. Once your cat is in the box you can pull the string and watch your cat pull it back – tug-of-war!
- **Scratching Posts** – Scratching posts are another good way of providing your cat with high perches and landings to climb up onto. They also have the benefit of providing your cat with a good spot to scratch and stretch. Scratching posts vary in quality and price and as a general rule - you get what you pay for. Often the cheaper posts don't last very long and cats don't like to use them much anyway due to the post being "wobbly," making the cats feel insecure. In the long run you are better off investing in something that is of better quality, even if it is a bit more of an expense.



Scratching Behavior

(AKA Why You Need a Good Scratching Post)

Your cat has a physical need to scratch. It is how he relieves tension, exercises muscles, leaves scent and marks territory. Every cat needs a scratching post that fulfills his need to scratch. When cats don't have an appropriate object on which to scratch, they often seek out other viable options, such as the sofa. If you are bringing a new cat into your home, having an appropriate scratching post from the very first day is essential. Ideally, it will become the focus for all scratching activity and prevent problems from developing.

What cats want and need in a post:

- **Strong, rough and sturdy.** Most scratching posts are made without consideration of what a cat really needs to scratch. They are made out of the wrong materials and are too short and too unstable. Cats don't want to scratch short, fluffy, wobbly things. Pretty fluffy posts may be appealing to you, but most cats find them useless.
- **Size matters.** A post should be as high as your cat is tall when he is fully stretched out plus a few inches. The post should also be wide enough that your cat can sit on top and survey his surroundings. The base should be sturdy enough that the post will not tip over. Once a post tips over on a cat it is very hard to convince a cat to use the post again. The post should be wrapped with sisal rope, or some other material that the cat can "dig its nails" into.
- **Cardboard can be great.** In addition to the big posts, many cats like the corrugated cardboard scratchers. These come in many varieties (flat, round and sloped) and are available at most pet supply stores. They do not last forever, but they are portable and can easily be tucked next to a couch or a bed.
- **Catnip can be wonderful.** To introduce the post to your cat you may want to use catnip as a lure for older cats (kittens younger than 5 months of age are not affected by catnip). Rub the catnip right into the rope so that the cat can smell that wonderful smell. Once your cat has smelled the catnip scratch your nails, gently, along the surface of the rope. This will help teach your cat where to scratch. Once your cat begins to scratch, praise your cat or give him a special treat.

Tips:

- Trim your cats claws at least every two weeks. If you haven't done this before, ask us to show you or consult your veterinarian.
- If your cat is using a certain corner of the couch for a scratching post, place the post right by that corner of the couch. Cover that corner of the couch with double-sided sticky tape that is completely unattractive to your cat (the tape can easily be removed for entertaining company). This will repel your cat away from your couch and right there is a post that they will love.

Remember: A good post can help save your furniture! However, if these suggestions do not work for you, please contact us at 703-746-4774 and let us help find an effective solution for you and your cat.



Cat-to-Cat Introductions

- Help settle the new cat in a small room with litterbox, food, water, toys, and a safe place to hide (such as a cat carrier with a towel inside).
- Let the new kitty become comfortable there for 3 or 4 days. Do not allow the cats to interact during this time. It is fine for the resident cat to be sniffing under the door and investigating.
- Switch bedding and other items that have the scent of each of the cats on them. This way each cat can become used to the scent of the other without meeting face to face.
- Spend quality time with each cat on either side of the door – petting, playing, relaxing. Again, they will be aware of each other, in a non-stressful situation. This is often reassuring to both of them.
- If at any point the hissing is intense, or either cat is growling, continue to keep them separate for as long as it takes the upset cat(s) to settle down. Other signs of stress are: not eating, not using the litterbox appropriately, over grooming, etc. (If these symptoms are apparent in your resident cat, please call your veterinarian. If the adopted cat shows these signs, please contact the Animal Welfare League of Alexandria.) This may mean that the separation needs to last a week or more. If the cats' interaction is more intense than you feel is normal, please contact the AWLA.
- If there is no intense hissing from either cat (i.e. loud hissing with wide open mouth and teeth showing, or multiple hisses), prop the door open just about an inch to allow the cats to view each other without being able to make contact. Leave the door open like this for a few days. Watch their interactions; if no serious hissing or aggression is noted, then it's time for the next step.
 - EXTRA STEPS FOR SHY CATS – If the new cat is shy, the introduction must be taken more slowly. He will need extra time to “settle” into his new environment, and to feel comfortable in his “safe” room. It may be necessary to repeat the introduction and separation programs several times. This separation time is also an excellent time for you to spend bonding with each cat.
- Open the door and allow the cats to interact on their own time. Do not force either cat to go from one space to another.
- Supervise their interactions. Only let them interact for short sessions: 10 to 15 minutes at a time. Then separate them again. Do this several times a day until you are sure they are tolerating the presence of the other cat, and not fighting, chasing, or watching the other cat intensely. Do not leave them alone together until you are reasonably certain that they will not hurt one another.
- Sometimes it helps to distract the cats with several toys but keep the toys four or more feet apart when playing. Sometimes cats play so hard, they forget to be upset about the other cat and start to become accustomed to the other cat's presence. There may be rivalries for toys, so this may not always work. Treats help alleviate this situation – give them treats in the presence of the other cats, and reward them when they are not hissing.

- Some cat to cat introductions go very smoothly, while others may take weeks or months before the cats learn to tolerate each other. The best thing to do is to go as slowly as necessary – don't rush the introduction. We all want our cats to get along well, and quickly. But, please remember that you are hoping and working for a very long-term relationship; being patient at first will pay off! Rushing the introduction will often cause serious problems which may take longer to solve.
- Finally: most cats will adjust to living in a multi cat household. Like people, some will enjoy it more than others. Patience on the part of all concerned will be more likely to produce an enduring peace than anything else. Enjoy your kitties!



Dog to Cat Introductions

- If you've decided to introduce a dog and a cat in your household, here are some pointers:
- **Slow and steady:** a safe and proper introduction can take up to a few weeks/months. Give the dog a few days to settle into the new environment/routine before starting the introduction. **Be sure to keep your new animals separated during this time.**
- **"Safety Room"** for your cat(s). Prepare for your cat(s) to live in this room for up to a few weeks. Make sure their food, litter boxes, scratching posts, places to hide/sleep and places to get up high such as a cat tree are in the room. It is important for your cat to have access to get out of view of the dog if they choose or to get up on a high surface if they choose. Cats find safety from places up high, so it may be wise to purchase a cat tree if you do not already have one.
- **Baby gates:** Place a baby gate in the doorway of the "Safety Room". You will want to keep this here even when the door is closed. This will work as a safety net for when you have to enter and exit the room. The baby gate will also play a critical role during the introductory period. We recommend a baby gate that has a door you can open and a small cat door at the bottom that the cat can go through but the dog will not fit through.
- **High value food:** have high value food ready for both the cat and the dog. Albacore tuna and meat flavored baby food can work as a good treat for both species. Sliced hot dogs or deli meats are also another option for the dog.
- Start with as much distance as your home will allow. Begin with a short session 10-15 minutes. Begin to increase the sessions as you close the distance gap between the dog and cat(s). The goal is to have both animals nice and relaxed while they are within close proximity to one another.
- When you and the animals feel comfortable, you can start opening the door to the cat room. Always give your cat choice to come out on their own. The first few times the cat comes out of the room, keep the leash dragging on the dog. Again, always have high value food on you for the dog when the cat is around.
- For the first few introductions always keep the dog on leash in the event you need to quickly gain control of the dog.
- Be aware of both dog and cat's body language during introductions. Feed the high value treats to all animals. We want cat to equal yummy treats to the dog and dog to equal yummy treats to the cat.
- Never force the cat (or dog) into proximity by holding her, caging her or otherwise restricting her desire to escape. This is stressful and does not help.

- Monitor your cats stress levels. Some signs that your cat is stressed may be change in appetite, inappropriate litter box use, constant hiding, etc. It can take weeks for a cat to acclimate to a new dog in the home. Be patient and aware of your cat's stress signals.
- In the first few weeks, observe the trend: are things getting better or worse? Monitor interactions until there is a pattern or plateau in their relationship.
- If the dog is the newcomer, be sure to give plenty of extra attention to the cat so she does not associate this change with reduced attention and affection. If the newcomer is a cat, it's also a good idea to make sure the dog associates the new intruder with good things for him. Shoot for positive associations always.
- Dogs should not have access to the cat litterbox – it is too stressful for the cat and the dog may eat cat feces and litter. Most dogs will also eat cat food the cat leaves behind – we suggest feeding cats in the cat's "safe" room or on a high surface. This is where the baby gate with a cat door at the bottom will be useful.
- If after all efforts, your new dog and cat(s) are not integrating well this is not a failure on your part. Some dogs and cats do not do well living with one another. If you have newly adopted a dog from AWLA, we will always take our dogs back. We fully understand that some dogs cannot be integrated into a home with cats.