



Cat Enrichment

When most people think of cats, they think of the lazy furrball who spends 18 hours a day posted up on the couch, sleeping, low-maintenance and independent, able to entertain themselves, and who are capable of going days or weeks without needing anything from people other than food, water and a clean litterbox. Some cats do in fact fit this description, while others are far from it. In fact, most cats are very human-social and need quite a bit from us on a daily basis.

In addition to keeping the food and water bowls full and the litterbox up to code, many cats require daily human interaction and entertainment that only we can provide. If your cat is a troublemaker and does things like knock items over, scratch furniture, play rough with you and other people, bully the other pets in the home, etc., then you may have a cat who is bored and frustrated and who is creating their own fun and activity. And when cats get bored, they rarely decide to do something we find productive, like balance our checkbook or do our Instacart shopping for us. Check out these enrichment ideas below and see if they do the trick for you and your cat. You may find that your cat loves all of these things, or that they may only like some. Trial and error to determine what they may like is expected, so don't get discouraged if your cat isn't too interested in the first couple things you try!

Interactive Play:

This is the big one, especially if you have a high energy cat and/or one who does any of the behaviors listed above. Just like dogs, a large percentage of cats *love* to play. Giving your cat this outlet each day could make all the difference in curbing many behavior problems. Follow the Interactive Play protocol to make sure that your cat gets the most out of this time and that neither you nor your cat fall into any bad habits.

Puzzle Toys:

Whether you use it to feed full meals or just some treats during the day, puzzle toys are a great brain game for cats. They can range anywhere from comically simple to extraordinarily complicated, so trial and error is to be expected to find where within that range your cat may lie. A quick internet search will yield you thousands of results, from factory-made to DIY. We'd recommend beginning simple, and then working your way up as your cat solves the puzzles. We'd also recommend trying some DIY puzzles first before spending too much money on store bought toys that your cat might not play with.

Cat Grass:

Providing more of a nutritional boost than mental, cat grass is still a fun thing for your cat to have, chew on and play with. Not to be confused with catnip, cat grass is its own separate entity and very easy to grow yourself either outside or indoors.

Catnip:

Catnip is likely the most popular enrichment given to cats. It's cheap, easy to obtain and makes for a ton of really funny videos and moments. While catnip is great for some cats, we would not recommend giving catnip if your cat is already a high-energy, easily excitable cat, as it could amplify the behavior.

Visual Enrichment:

Visual enrichment is especially recommended if your cat was ever an outdoor cat who now lives inside, though anyone can enjoy this just the same. Cats, at their core, are hunters, and they love to watch birds, squirrels and other critters go on about their day. If you have a window in your home that has good wildlife traffic, then give your cat access to it whenever they please, so they can make perch and enjoy the show. If you don't have windows in your home for your cat to access, then you can pull up videos on YouTube on either your phone or TV for them to watch. Just search "bird videos for cats," and you'll get an array of results.

Vertical Space:

Cats love to climb, and they'll often hide up high if/when they feel like they need or want to remove themselves. Having a number of vertical space options is crucial for many cats' happiness and can be obtained by having cats trees available, shelves for your cat to jump and rest on, access to taller furniture, etc. You may find that your cat prefers to eat their meals up in one of these higher spaces as well.

Scratching:

Just like dogs like to chew, cats love to scratch. Having appropriate scratching options will go a long way in helping to keep them from tearing up furniture, your arms or anything else you may not want them to scratch. Another area where you should expect a lot of trial and error, many cats can and will be particular about the type of surfaces they like to scratch. Some will prefer cardboard, others carpet-like material, others roll-type material, etc. In addition, you may notice that your cat likes to scratch either horizontally, or vertically, meaning you may have to adjust how their scratcher is positioned.