

# Enrichment for the Indoor Cat

Many indoor cats are bored with their life! And when bored, many cats get into trouble as they try to entertain themselves with your furniture, plants and belongings. In addition, bored cats often get fat and lazy because they simply have nothing to do. To insure a healthy cat (behaviorally and medically) providing them with enrichment is critical.

The following strategies can help your indoor cat lead a more fulfilled life.

## Food Gathering

Cats are hunters remember. Hiding food around the house for the cat to forage for instead of giving it in a bowl is an excellent form of mental and physical stimulation. You can hide individual kibbles or small piles. The cat's acute sense of smell will allow her to find the food. Vary your hiding places daily.

Place kibble in feeder balls so that your cat has to work for her food. There are commercially available cat feeder balls available but any small ball with a hole cut out can be used.

## Water Gathering

Cats like running water so instead of a bowl of water - purchase a cat water fountain so that drinking is more stimulating.

## Visual Stimulation

Provide a room with a view - provide your cat with a couple of window seats so that they can observe the outside world.

Place bird feeders outside of the windows so the cat has something interesting to watch.

## Auditory Stimulation

Purchase a bird song CD and play it occasionally for a few minutes. The sound of birds is biologically significant and your cat will surely be interested.

## Catnip & Silver vine

Only about 60% of cats respond to catnip but if yours is one of them, provide a small pile of catnip several times each week. Silver vine is another stimulant that you can provide to your cat.

## Play Stimulation

Provide your cat with a rigorous play session twice a day at roughly the same time (cats like routine). The sessions only have to be about 10 minutes long (longer is okay if both of you are having fun) so you should be able to squeeze it into your day.

Some suggestions for play include:

1. Laser pointers (make sure the end the game by placing the laser beam onto a toy that your cat can "capture").
2. Fishing-pole type toys
3. Feather dancer type toys
4. Balls
5. Pipe cleaners, bottle caps, soda bottle caps, wooden clothes pins, etc.
6. Puzzle toys are great for self-play (Example: Peek-a-price toy box)

## Scratching Posts

Scratching is a normal cat behavior that serves many functions for your cat. Providing a variety of interesting scratching posts around the house will give your cat the opportunity to perform this natural behavior without ruining your furniture.

1. Provide both vertical and horizontal scratching posts.
2. Provide posts with a variety of substrates - corrugated cardboard, sisal rope, natural wood and loop-less carpet (their claws get stuck in the looped carpet and they will stop using it).
3. Encourage your cat to use her post with catnip or toys.
4. Reward use with verbal praise of a treat after use.

## Cat Grass

You can grow containers of cat grass for your cat to gnaw on.

## Rawhide

If your cat is a chewer - provide her with rawhide sticks to chew and carry around.

## Clicker Training

Yes, you can train your cat!!! Cats can be trained to do anything a dog can do.

Clicker training is a training technique that is based on the science of how animals learn.

First - pair the sound of the clicker with a food treat. Once you have done this *Pavlovian Conditioning* you can use the sound of the clicker to "mark" the behavior you want to reward.

You can purchase a book entitled "Clicker Training for Cats" through the website [www.clickertraining.com](http://www.clickertraining.com) where there is plenty of great information on clicker training your cat. There are also You Tube videos showing clicker training for cats.

## Outside Time

The outside world is very stimulating for cats but there is risk just letting your cat outside (traffic, dogs, wild animal bites, etc.). You can provide your cat with safe outdoor time by building a screened-in enclosure or by teaching her to walk on a harness and leash and taking her for walks. The Purrfect cat fence is a great option. ([www.purrfectfence.com](http://www.purrfectfence.com))