

All About Litter Boxes!

Using the litter box is intuitive to cats and generally there is little you will need to do to “litter-train” your new friend. Here are some tips to help keep your kitty using the litter box!

Location: Choosing an appropriate litter box location is an extremely important aspect of encouraging your cat to maintain good litter box habits. Keep the following in mind:

- **Is it accessible?** It’s important for your cat to have access to the litter box at all times. Make sure there are no obstacles that might limit access (for example, older cats may find it difficult to go up and down stairs to reach the litter box). Keep a litter box on each floor of multi-level homes.
- **Is it in a comfortable place?** The basement is a common (though not necessarily ideal) litter box location. Appliances such as the furnace can surprise or frighten a cat if they suddenly turn on, which can create a negative association with the litter box and prevent them from using it. Select a quiet place for the litterbox where the cat won’t be disturbed.
- **Is it the right size?** Cats need enough room to move around! Consider the height of the box for elderly or disabled cats- they need to be able to get over the sides & into the box without difficulty.

Litter type: At HSCC, we use [Pet’s Pal unscented clay litter](#). Some cats are finicky and will refuse to use certain litters (which means your laundry pile or tub might be used instead!). There’s no perfect type--just find what your cat likes! Consider factors like texture, odor (some cats are put off by the strong perfume of scented litters), or volume (cats need to have enough litter to scratch around in & cover things up!).

Helpful Tips

- **Clean the litter box regularly!** Some cats are fussy & will only use a clean litter box. Scoop daily! Don’t use heavily-scented cleaners: mild soap & hot water will do just fine!
- **Covered litter boxes are often preferred by cat owners but not necessarily by cats themselves.** Covers work well for cats that urinate high up on their box walls, but may be too confining for some cats. We recommend first experimenting by offering both covered and uncovered options to be sure that your cat will use a covered litter box.
- **For multiple cat homes, we recommend providing one litter box for each cat in the home, plus one more.** You may find that your cat tends to urinate in one and defecate in another. The boxes should be kept in a couple of different locations to prevent any territorial problems from arising.
- **Consider a natural or biodegradable litter.** Longhaired or clumsy cats sometimes get litter stuck to their toes and fur and may accidentally ingest it while cleaning themselves. Litters made of materials like corn, pine, or wheat are less likely to cause GI issues as clay-based or clumping formula litters.

Inappropriate Elimination

Is your cat going outside the litterbox? When cats urinate or defecate outside of the litter box (known as “inappropriate elimination”), it is usually an attempt to communicate that they are unhappy about something: either they aren’t feeling well physically, or they are stressed about some environmental change. Here are a few steps you can take to remedy inappropriate elimination issues:

- Take your cat to the vet to rule out any potential medical issues.
- Consider any recent environmental changes: Do you have a new family member or pet? Have you moved recently? Helping your cat adjust to these changes may address the root of the problem.
- Try a different litter or box setup: sometimes a different type of litter or an extra box can do the trick!
- Problem area? If your cat is consistently using the same spot, try placing a litter box on top of that spot.