



Beating Boredom

There is ample evidence that cats who spend their lives entirely indoors live much longer than their outdoor-only counterparts. But keeping an indoor cat happy as well as healthy means providing more than just good nutrition and regular veterinary care - you must also enrich your kitty's environment. Eliciting a cat's natural behaviors with hunting and foraging games can do wonders for your companion's well-being.

With a little creativity, you can keep your cat stimulated and interested, even in a small apartment and on a limited budget. And the good news is that enrichment research has shown that toys that are removed and then returned after several weeks regain much of their novelty; extend your enrichment budget by rotating your cat's toys regularly. Get started with a few of these feline friendly activities, but begin slowly and be sure to get a thumbs up from kitty's veterinarian.

Foraging Fun

Separate each day's food rations into small batches. Place the clusters around the house and then toss a few small treats in random directions. Not only will this encourage active foraging, it'll also keep kitty from scarfing down her food too quickly.

Pleasurable Puzzles

Toss a few treats into a square Rubbermaid® bottle and leave it on the floor with the lid off for a great beginner puzzle.

Any plastic container with a secure lid can become a hanging puzzle. Just cut two or three slots around the bottom outer edge of the container and place a few treats in the center. String a cord through the lid and hang this puzzle over a doorknob. Once your cat gets the hang of it, you can encourage exercise by raising it higher.

Scent Searching

Use old socks as washable scent baits. Just mark the sock with a dab of perfume, lotion, vanilla extract or even peanut butter, or place a pinch of any aromatic spice inside, then rub it over a slice of lunchmeat to pick up the scent. Scatter the socks throughout the house and your cat will be on the prowl for hours, delighted by the variety of scents. If you're pressed for time, simply mark a scent trail with a bit of cheese and then hide the cheese at the end of the trail.

Bird Watching

Attach a suction-cup bird feeder outside your cat's favorite window. Hungry birds will provide hours of entertainment. Don't place feeders too close to the ground as

it leaves birds vulnerable to enemy attacks, and be sure to keep the window closed - 'excited cats can push right through screens.

Mouse Trap

Leave a ping-pong ball in the bathtub and watch as your cat makes it sail around the curves during her hunt for the elusive orb.

Crafty Cardboard

Use cardboard boxes as beds, dens, tunnels and mazes.

Make a "busy box" by attaching small toys to short lengths of cord and suspending them from the ceiling of a large box. Cut window flaps in the den at various heights.

Add a "Tiger Tug," ' a miniature version of a game popular with both tigers and chimps. Feed both ends of a length of parachute cord into the box through small holes. Tie a toy or a large knot on each end. When the cat tugs at one end, the other end mysteriously comes to life. For multicat households, run the ends into separate boxes.

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