



Caring for Your New Cat or Kitten

We hope that you will love and care for your new cat just as we have. With the best of care and barring unforeseen events, you will have this furry companion for many years.

There have been many recent changes made in this cat's life and small familiarities can make the adaptation process much easier. In order to make the transition as smooth as possible for all involved, here are a few tips and ideas.

Preparations for Health and Safety

- Not everybody likes collars, but if there are people in your house who are careless with doors, a non-snagging collar for attaching your pet's identification tag is best. Buy a breakaway collar for safety's sake. Be sure to check the size every week in a growing animal! You should be able to fit two fingers under the collar.
- Consider microchipping your companion, too. Get details from your vet.
- Every animal should have her own food bowl. Glass, ceramic, or glazed pottery dishes are better than plastic because plastic absorbs trace amounts of fat from the food. The fat quickly becomes rancid and attracts bacteria, which in turn end up on your cat's chin.

The result can be feline acne. Similar to acne in humans, it begins as pores clog with black stuff that at first can be flicked off the chin and from around the lip line. Then blackheads form, the cat scratches them, gets zits, and if untreated, the cat can end up with a swollen chin full of nasty carbuncles that drain for weeks. At this point the cat will need to be on antibiotics.

If you feed canned food, plan to wash that dish after each meal.

- A complete and balanced food appropriate to your cat's age and health is key. Although canned food may seem more palatable, the major difference is increased water content and price. Canned food also spoils quickly in the bowl. Dry kibble helps prevent dental tartar and plaque formation which, over the years, can lead to periodontal disease.

Anytime an animal's diet is suddenly changed, the result is usually an intestinal tract upset (i.e., diarrhea or

constipation). And, by the way, cats do not need milk and many cannot adequately break down the lactose/lase without gastrointestinal upsets.

Some cats just don't know when to quit eating. Providing between 1/4 cup and 1/2 cup of dry food twice a day (smaller amounts four to five times a day for young kittens) and removing any food left in the bowl after 20 minutes, will allow you to monitor each animal's appetite. This is very useful to know since inappetence is often the first sign of illness.

- Use a water bowl for clean, fresh water to be available at all times. It's easier to keep water deposits off glass, ceramics, or glazed pottery than plastic. Plan to change the water every day.
- Airtight storage containers for holding dry food and treats are safer and much more convenient than digging to the bottom of big bags. Cat food (like potato chips) goes stale quickly if stored improperly.
- A measuring cup for scooping dry food will ensure you are feeding the correct amount of food for the age and health of your cat.
- Plan on offering one litter box for each cat. Think of "extra" boxes as an insurance policy (but remember that it only works if they're kept clean!). In larger, indoor colonies, we've noticed that sometimes the group agrees to maintain some pee-only boxes and some poop-only boxes.

For the first couple of weeks in your house, continue using the "familiar" brand until the cat has gotten over the upset of the transition.

Some cats may also be sensitive or even allergic to the type of litter used and may even refuse a litter box that is not filled with their favorite litter. There are a host of litters available. (If you experience problems with a cat suddenly refusing a clean litter box, the first thing to consider is whether you have recently changed litter types.)

- All sorts of toys keep kitty from being bored. Plus, playtime gives you yet another chance to establish a ritual and bond with your new feline friend. Cats learn play behavior (as a precursor to predatory behavior) from their mothers and practice it with their siblings. If they never play as babies, they won't be playful as adults.



Kittens and cats play with all sorts of feathers, small balls, wadded up paper, and even flashlight/laser spots on the floor. Don't use your hands as toys and don't play rough with your cat—she's armed with saber-sharp teeth and claws, and a nasty bacterium (*Pasturella*) in her saliva that is guaranteed to cause infection.

While playing, if your cat exhibits unruly or overly-aggressive behavior, divert his attention immediately by saying "yeow!" in a high squeaky voice (like his siblings did); distracting him by throwing a toy across the room; or by sitting on (or otherwise hiding) your hands. At times the best thing to do is to simply walk away, completely withdrawing your attention from him.

Slapping, spanking, or yelling at a cat will just make her fear and avoid you—don't go there.

- A hair pickup device will help you remove most of the cat hair from your clothing and furniture.
- A pet taxi is absolutely essential for traveling with your pet and going to the vet.
- A soft pet toothbrush and flavored toothpaste to promote those healthy teeth and gums that need to last your cat a lifetime.
- A comb and a brush to keep your cat's skin healthy and coat shiny.
- Claw clippers, unless you plan to have your cat professionally groomed.
- A bed or soft mat for a place to curl up and nap.
- A scratching post (even for declawed cats) or cat furniture since it's either a place of her own to scratch and perch, or it's your couch.

Highly-recommended items

- An enzyme stain and odor neutralizer (in a spray bottle) for quickly treating accidents.
- Cat treats just because you love him!
- Catnip because cats have fun with it, and you'll have fun watching them get silly!
- Hairball paste or gel to help keep hairballs from becoming a problem. It is inevitable that in the process of grooming, a cat will swallow fur. Brushing several times a week will minimize the amount of fur swallowed.

To help the cat pass the fur (and prevent hairballs from forming—and being vomited), give a dose of *Petromalt*TM or any other patent hairball medicine 1 or 2 times per week. A dab of *Vaseline*TM works well also (as a good, low-cost alternative). Don't make this an every day thing or you will disrupt your cat's assimilation of vitamin A.

- Ear cleaner to keep your cat's ears clean and healthy.
- Cat shampoo and conditioner to keep your kitty looking (and smelling) nice. Cats do not need regular baths, but occasionally they get diarrhea...
- Flea prevention medication to ward off a possible infestation (if your kitty spends time on a screened-in porch).

- Books, magazines, and videos to learn more about your new buddy.

Special items

- Vitamins for pets who need a little extra boost due to being sick or undernourished.
- Leash and a harness (or walking vest) if you want to train your cat to walk with you.

Introducing Your New Cat to Others

If you need to introduce a cat to other animals, make sure your new animal has been seen by a veterinarian to reduce the risk of transmitting illnesses or parasites to your other animals.



The key to introductions is patience. It may take several weeks to a month to achieve desired results; then again, it may only take overnight. Do not give up, and don't lose your temper. The outcome of this process is dependent upon the temperament and ages of the animals involved and your levels of patience and consistency.

In some cases, you can simply introduce them, let them work things out, and after a week or so, things are fine. Some introductions require more time and become a lengthy process that you will have to work through.

In general, the following procedure will work

- Rub the animals (newcomer/s and existing residents) down with a washcloth soaked in cider vinegar. This will make everybody smell the same.
- Put the new cat in her own room, with her own litter box and dishes. After a day or so of this, put the new cat in her carrier, take her out of the room and let the original pet/s smell and explore the room thoroughly. Put the new cat back in. Keep repeating.
- Depending on the reactions involved, let the new cat out to meet the original pet/s under supervision. If there is some hostility, keep them separated while you are gone until you are certain that they get along. It is best if you can arrange a safe "retreat" for each animal.
- The length of time and amount of supervision required can be modified as you discover how the animals react to one another. Some forms of cat interaction or play can appear hostile but in reality, are not.

Get clues from the position of the ears. Ears laid flat back when the cat is standing and staring means trouble. If the interaction immediately stops when one cat yelps or squeaks, they're OK.

Introducing a very young animal to a household with an elderly animal already present can be stressful to the older animal. The best way to handle this is to make sure the older animal does not feel threatened by the newcomer.



Lavish attention on the older animal, not the newcomer. Make sure the older animal has a cozy place for retreat, and undisturbed time to eat and relieve herself.

A puppy introduced to a cat will quickly view her as another sort of dog and leave her alone or, more often, want to play with her. The cat will view the dog as a nuisance for some time, but will eventually learn to ignore him or even to play with him.

Introducing a kitten to an older dog will depend on the dog's temperament. Many dogs are good with cats, such as Labs or Newfies, and will present few problems. Dogs with high prey drives need to be taught to leave the kitten alone.

Soon enough, the kitten will be able to get up out of the dog's reach when he wants to be left alone. Providing the cat with a place the dog can't get to is always helpful. This can be achieved by placing a childproof gate in the door of a room high enough for the cat to get under but not for the dog. Do trim the cat's claws to minimize damage to the dog's nose.

According to humane society studies, these are some combinations of animals that tend to work well:

- two kittens
- an older kitten and a puppy
- a pair of mature neutered animals
- two cats
- two dogs.

Cat Food and Diets

Premium Cat Food—Although more expensive than average brands, these foods are better for your cat. They are low-bulk, which means that cats will digest more of the food, thus eating and eliminating less. They contain fewer dyes—important for clean up if your cat vomits regularly. They're probably also better from an allergy standpoint.

Examples of these kind of brands include (but are not limited to) *Hill's Science Diet*[™], *Iams*[™], *Wyson*[™], *Nature's Recipe*[™] (*Optimum Feline*), and *Purina*[™] (*One*). These foods are also beneficial for cats' coats and many have attested to their cat's silky fur and good health on these diets.

Cat Food Composition—The Guaranteed Crude analysis provides more nutrition info than you can get on the vast majority of human foods. For more info, contact the vendor. Major commercial cat food is formulated with either natural ingredients (including meat byproducts which supply nutrients to cats that meat itself doesn't since cats

in the wild eat the whole animal) or are supplemented with the required nutrients to make them balanced diets for cats.

Wet Foods—Canned foods contain quite a bit of water, so each canned meal will cost you more than dry kibble. Tartar buildup may be a problem. Smell (of the food, the cat's breath, or the cat's feces) and gas can also be problematic. Canned food spoils quickly, especially in warm weather.

Stools will be softer. On the other hand, cats who have medical conditions requiring higher water intake may benefit from the water in these products.

Dry Foods—Cats will require more water on this kind of diet, but tartar-buildup may be lessened as a result of crunching on the kibble. Generally it's less expensive and less smelly. Dishes remain cleaner and food will not spoil as quickly. Stools will be firmer.

Moist Foods—These are "soft kibbles." The benefits are difficult to ascertain. They are more appealing to humans than anything else. There is no anti-tartar benefit and not much difference from canned food. They are fairly expensive. A lot of dye is typically used, which makes vomit prone to stain. Some are actually bad for your cat: propylene glycol found in these products (as a preservative) can damage red blood cells and sensitize the cats to other things as well. (Source: August 1992 edition of *Cats Magazine*.)

Snack Foods—Many snack products are out there for cats. Most are fine as supplemental feeding, but of course they should never take place of regular food. Try to use treats that are nutritionally balanced so as to minimize any disruption in your cat's overall diet.

Treats like dried liver, which are not balanced food, should be used sparingly. However, these products can be very useful in training.

Milk Products—Most adult cats are lactose intolerant and drinking milk will give them diarrhea. Cream is better than milk—most cats can handle the butterfat just fine and it's good for them. A small serving of cream will satisfy the cat more than a saucer of milk and will contain less lactose.

Homemade Food—A number of cat books contain recipes for making your own kitty treats. These can be fun to make and give to your cat.

People Food—It is a poor idea to feed cats table scraps or food from your own meals. First, table scraps do not meet your cat's nutritional needs and only add unneeded calories or indigestibles to his diet. Second, you risk having your cat become a major nuisance when you are eating. Stick with prepared cat treats. Any food you give him should be placed in his food dish, or you can give him treats as long as you are not eating or preparing your own food.

Cat Grass—Cats benefit from some vegetable matter in their diet. When devouring prey, the intestines, along with anything in them, will also be eaten. Many owners grow some grass for their cats to munch on, both for a healthy diet, and to distract them from other household plants!

In general, seeds that are OK to grow and give to your cats (but do not use treated seeds, identifiable by a dyed red, blue, or electric green color):

- oats (cheap, easy, big)
- wheat (not wheatgrass)
- Japanese barnyard millet
- bluegrass
- fescue
- rye (but beware of ergot, which is a fungal infection and produces LSD-like chemicals),
- ryegrass (annual ryegrass is cheap and easy to grow, but small),
- alfalfa sprouts or bean sprouts in SMALL amounts (these have anti-protein compounds that reduce the protein value of other things fed to the animal—or human!)

Seeds that are NOT okay: sorghum or sudangrass, which have cyanogenic glycosides, and can cause cyanide poisoning. These are commonly found in bird seed and look like smallish white, yellow, orangish, or reddish BBs, or the shiny black, yellow or straw colored glumes may be intact.

Dog Food—Dog food is not suitable for cats since it does not have the correct balance of nutrients. Cats need much more fat and protein than dogs do and will become seriously ill if fed dog food for an extended period of time.

Ash—“Ash” in cat food is the inorganic mineral content left over when the organic portion has been removed. It generally consists of potassium, magnesium, and sodium salts, along with smaller amounts of other minerals.

It once was thought that the total “ash” content of food contributed to Feline Urinary Track Syndrome (FUS), but now, attention has focused on magnesium as the culprit. Many commercial foods now list the magnesium content as a separate item in the list of nutrients on the bag, box, or can.

Feeding Schedules—We recommend that you put down a set amount of food at specific times of the day. This is necessary if the food will spoil (canned food, for example) or if your cat tends to overeat. Overeaters need to be put on a fixed schedule to avoid weight problems.

Do *not* assume a cat will only eat what she needs: if she starts putting on too much weight (check with your vet), give her two feedings a day, putting down half the recommended daily amount each time.

The other method (called “free-feeding”) is to have dry food available all the time.

Special Diets—You may need to change your cat’s diet for any number of reasons. Often, you will find that your cat refuses the new food. If you always give in to his refusal to eat the provided food, your cat has trained you to feed him what he wants.

Leave food out and keep it fresh until your cat is hungry enough to eat it. Your cat will not be harmed by a few days of low food intake: as a carnivore, he’s biologically

adapted to going without food for several days between kills. Although, cats (especially those who are overweight) who don’t eat for more than three days are at risk for developing fatty liver disease. This is a serious condition that requires veterinary care.

The best way to decrease the total amount of food the cat normally eats is to reduce the amount of food gradually.

If you have a cat who bolts his food down (and throws it back up), slow his eating by placing several one- to two-inch diameter clean rocks in his food bowl. Picking the food out will slow him down. Be sure the rocks aren’t so small he could eat them by accident.

If you have multiple cats, and one of them requires special food (from medical to weight-loss diets), then go to a fixed feeding schedule to ensure that the special-needs cat not only gets her food, but doesn’t get any other food. If you have been free-feeding, switch them over.

Don’t put out any food the first morning; that evening, put out the dishes and supervise the cats. They will most likely be hungry and eat most of the food. Take the dishes up after 1/2 hour or so and wait until morning.

Thereafter, remain on the morning/night- or even just night-scheduled feedings and your cats will adapt quickly enough. If you have trouble with one cat finishing quickly and going over to feed on other cats’ food, put them in separate rooms while feeding, or feed the speed eater in a pet taxi.



Vegetarian Diet—cats require the aminosulfonic acid taurine, which is unavailable in natural vegetable except for trace concentrations in some plant sources like pumpkin seeds—not enough to do a cat any good. Lack of taurine can cause blindness or even death from cardiomyopathy. There are also a few other similar nutrients, such as arachidonic acid (a fatty acid only found in animals), but taurine is the most widely known.

Some small manufacturers claim to have produced synthetically-based supplements that when combined with an appropriately balanced all-vegetable diet will provide the complete nutrition required by cats.

No one has been able to find studies which demonstrate that cats who eat such a diet over the long term stay healthy.

Litter Boxes

Most cats are fussy about the cleanliness of their litter box. Scoop solid matter out on a daily basis. If a cat is displeased with the litter box for a variety of reasons ranging from cleanliness to the type of litter used, she may well select another spot in your house more to her liking!

Some cats have a tendency to scatter litter outside the

box when they bury their stool. Consider buying a plastic storage box with higher sides. You could buy a hooded litter box, but a drawback to the “hoods” is that they tend to trap odors. To minimize litter tracking, put a mat just outside the litter box.

For easier litter-changing, some people use litter box liners. But the folds often trap urine, keeping it from being absorbed. In addition, some cats rip the plastic while burying their feces.

If you have multiple cats, offer several litter boxes. If you have a young cat and a large house, use several litter boxes so that there will be one near enough at any point, or confine the young cat at first, to an area of the house within easy reach of the litter box.

Disinfect the litter box (and hood, if any) on a weekly basis to prevent illness and disease. Bleach is a good disinfectant around cats, although be sure to rinse thoroughly and air out all the fumes. Do NOT use phenol- or pine-oil based cleaners (*Lysol*TM, *Pine-sol*TM, etc.) as these are toxic to cats.



Litter box placement

Beyond making the litter box readily accessible to your cat, there is some consideration as to an aesthetically pleasing placement. Utility closets that the cat can always access are useful. Laundry rooms and basements work well. If you have more than one animal, consider the “ambush potential” when choosing a spot for the boxes.

Litter

There are various kinds of litter available.

- The traditional clay-based litter is composed of clay particles that will absorb urine to some extent. In general, you need to scoop out solid matter regularly, and change the litter entirely once a week. Variations on clay particles include green pellets (resembling rabbit food) or shredded cedar (like hamster bedding). Examples include *Tidy Cat*, etc. Clay tends to be cheap but heavy.
- Auto-parts stores sell a sweeping compound to absorb liquids made from dolomite. It's more absorbent than clay and not nearly as heavy. *Floor Dry*TM at Paul's is an example.
- There are many varieties of clumping cat litter. In theory, you never need to change the litter again, only add a little more to replace the loss to cleaning out the urine and feces (which offsets the initial cost). Reality dictates that litter boxes should be disinfected on a weekly basis to prevent illness and disease.

Sometimes the clumps break apart and there are some “extra strong” varieties to address this problem. The litter is usually sandy and tracks rather easily. Some cats seem to develop diarrhea with this litter; some people

are rather allergic to the very fine dust from this type of litter. Currently, this appears to be the most popular type of cat litter, judging by what is available at pet supply stores.

Some warnings exist about the safety of clumping litters. While some are extremely vague and unverifiable, such as the dust causing “immune system problems,” one warning to take more seriously involves cats who ingest clumping litter. Since it swells into a solid mass, this can cause obstructions.

Cats most at risk include kittens (who do not have to ingest very much to create a problem), and those who lick off large amounts of clumping litter from their paws or bodies. However, many cats have used clumping litter for years without problems, so whether clumping litter is a problem probably needs to be made on a case-by-case basis.

- There is a non-sandy clumping litter called *Booda's Ultra Clump*TM; a drawback includes the clumps sticking to the pan itself (baking soda, pan liners, or small amounts of sandy clumping litter will remedy this). But it eliminates the tracking problems of the sandy kind of clumping litter. (It looks like regular clay-based litter.) There are now several brands similar to this.
- 4060-grade sandblasting grit made out of corncobs is an inexpensive alternative to clay-based clumping litter. It clumps as well as the flushable kind of clumping litter, and also smells better. It isn't available in all areas, but tends to be comparably priced to plain clay-based litter.
- Coarse corncob litter (commonly sold as “animal bedding and litter” by pet suppliers) about the size of peas, can be used. This is used in conjunction with a litter pan that has a screen and a drain pan underneath, into which the urine drains (and feces are removed as normal). It is almost completely dust free, unlike clay-based litters.
- There are some litters intended for multiple cat households in both traditional clay and clumping forms. They pretty much work as advertised. A better (less fume-y) way to control strong ammonia smells is to scoop regularly and mix baking soda in with the litter.
- *FelinePine*TM, *EquinePine*TM, and *PineFresh* are natural pine wood litter that comes in little pellets. The pellets disintegrate in the urine and solid waste is scooped out.
You don't have to change the litter as often provided solids are cleaned out daily and the disintegrated stuff is sifted out twice a week. There is virtually no odor and no dust and it comes with a money back guarantee. It flushes just fine down non-septic systems. We mix *FelinePine*TM with the dolomite and our cats love it!
- Plain sawdust or wood shavings can be used as litter. Some cats may not like it since it doesn't absorb as well and may feel wet. But it is very cheap.

Some cats seem to prefer certain kinds of litter over others, you may need to experiment. A cat displeased with its

litter box generally makes his feelings abundantly clear by finding a “better” place.

Disposal of used litter

When disposing of litter, bag and tie it securely, for the benefit of the garbage collectors. Some people flush solid matter, but be aware that septic tanks do not handle clay well (even the small amount clinging to scooped items). Clumping litter is supposed to be flushable, (not if you have a septic tank).

Don't use litter as a fertilizer in your garden. It is not a manure since cats are not vegetarians and should not be used as such. It is incredibly stinky, can attract neighborhood cats, and there's a chance that it would be unhealthy for your plants and for you (if you eat whatever was fertilized by it).

Grooming

Start early with your cat. The younger he is when you begin grooming him, the more pleasant grooming will be. A cat who fights grooming may need sedation and shaving at the veterinarian's for matted fur.

It is well worth the time to get your cat to at least tolerate grooming. Start with short sessions. Stick to areas that he seems to enjoy (often the top of the head and around the neck) first, and work your way around, bit by bit. Experiment to find the brush and routine that seems to work best with your cat. Quit before things get tedious and reward the cat with a treat.

Trimming claws

This is easiest if you start from the beginning when your cat is a kitten, although most adult cats can be persuaded to accept this procedure.

Use nail clippers available at pet stores. The clippers that look like scissors with short, hooked blades are the easiest for most people to use.

- Set your cat down securely in the crook of your “off” arm, with the cat either in your lap, on the floor between your knees, or on the counter;
- Depending on the size of your cat and your own size, pin the cat to your side with your arm and hold one of her paws with your hand. This is sometimes a little much for an “off” arm, (or the cat) so practice!
- With her back away from you, she cannot scratch you, or easily get away. With your “dominant” hand, hold the clippers. If you squeeze her paw with your “off hand,” the claws will extend. Examine them carefully (you may want to do this part before actually trying to trim them, to familiarize yourself with how her claws look).

If the claws are white (most cat's are), the difference between the nail and the quick is easy to see in good lighting. The quick is the pink tissue visible within the claw at the base. This is comparable to the difference between the nail attached to your skin and the part that grows beyond it. Do not cut below the quick. It will be painful to your

cat. The quick also bleeds excessively. When in doubt, trim less of the claw.

Clip off the portion beyond the quick for each claw. Don't forget the dewclaws, found only on the front paws, about where humans would have their thumbs—they do not touch the ground.

Normally there are four claws per paw, with one dewclaw on the inside of each of the forelegs.

If you have too much trouble holding the cat still, enlist someone else to help. Practice holding each paw and expressing the claws.



Claws grow constantly, like human nails. Unlike human nails, however, claws must shed the outer layers to stay sharp. Cats will pull on their claws or scratch to remove the outer layers. This is perfectly normal and is comparable to humans cutting and filing their own nails. You may see slices of claws lying around, especially near scratching posts.

Trim claws weekly. Different claws grow at different rates. Check them periodically (use the same position you use for clipping: it gives you extra practice and reduces the cat's anxiety at being in that position). Rear claws won't need to be trimmed as often as those on front paws.

Bathing

You will not ordinarily need to bath a cat. Cats are normally very good about cleaning themselves, and for most cats, that's all the bathing they will ever need. Having someone help you hold the cat definitely helps.

If your cat is long haired, groom him before bathing. Water will just tighten any mats already in the coat.

- **Get everything ready.** Warm water, selected bathing place (the kitchen sink will be easier on your back). Having water already in the tub or sink reduces the potential terror to the cat at the sound and sight of the water coming from the faucet.
- **Put a towel or rubber mat on the bottom of the tub or sink** to give your cat something to sink her claws into. A spray attachment will help soak the cat efficiently. Use a product formulated for cat skin, as human-type soaps remove all the essential oils and leave her skin dried out.
- **Towel dry your cat.** You can try a hair dryer on a low setting depending on your cat's tolerance to noise. If she is longhaired, comb her as her coat dries. Giving her a treat after the bath may help her tolerate the process.

If the problem is greasy skin, try a dry cat shampoo instead.

If you are attempting to remove grease, oil, or other petroleum products from your cat's fur, try using *Dawn*™

brand dish detergent first to remove it, and follow up with a cat shampoo. *Dawn*TM is used by volunteers who clean up shore birds after oil spills.

Playing

Most cats love interactive play. There is the usual string or ball chasing; a few will even retrieve thrown items. "Hide and seek" and "Peekaboo" are also popular. Cats commonly display interest by dilating their pupils. Look for this reaction to see what catches her attention.

Try a small pencil flashlight or a small laser light for a game of "flashlight tag." Cats love to chase the light across the floor, over furniture and up walls. The lower-wattage laser pointers (0.1mW or less) are quite safe for something like this. Never shine a laser into anyone's eyes.

Cats will often display behavior commonly called "evening crazies" since this behavior seems to occur most often at dusk. This consists of the cat's eyes dilating, his tail poofing out, and alternating between hopping sideways and racing all over the house.

Take him up on the challenge. Chase after him. Exercise at this time can be very useful, since playing with a cat just before bedtime reduces the chances of him wanting to play with you at 3AM.

Other toys

In general, cats perversely favor the cheap homemade toy over the expensive store-bought toy. Toys commonly adored are balls of foil or paper balls, little plastic rings from milk jugs, pencils, paper bags, cardboard boxes, *Q-tips*TM, *Cat Dancers*TM—the list is nearly infinite.

Videotapes of birds and mice complete with intriguing noises are entrancing. If your cat seems to like watching TV (some do), this might be a fun pastime.

Take sensible precautions with toys that can injure the cat: avoid toys small enough to be swallowed or choked on. Avoid those with loose or potentially sharp parts, and avoid toys that can strangulate the cat or shred the intestines if swallowed (including thread, tinsel, string, and rubber bands).

Check out the Resources section of our web site for ideas on where to get good toys.

Scratching posts

You can order a quality 36" catnip tree from *Felix* (1-800-24-Felix), especially if you cannot make one on your own because of lack of skill, time, or workspace.

Cats especially enjoy being able to climb up and down these structures. Expect to pay between \$75-\$100 for a good sized one. Look for height, sturdiness, and balance.

Sisal has been recommended over carpet for a scratching post cover. Cats seem to like the texture better, and it helps avoid confusion over which carpet is the "correct" material to scratch. Check the Resources section of our web site for photos and other examples.

Chunks of catnip-treated corrugated cardboard scratching pads available at pet supply stores for about \$8 each. They can be hung from a door, tacked to a wall, or just laid flat on the floor. You might have to "demonstrate" their use. Most cats love the texture of the cardboard (as well as the catnip).

Cat Safety in the House

Besides some of the more obvious things like electrical cords, here are some other things to watch out for:

- **Recliner chairs.** Many cats will go underneath these chairs as a hiding or resting place. Cats who are caught in the mechanism when the chair is opened or closed can be seriously injured.
- **The dryer.** Many cats find this small enclosed space with warm clothing especially inviting. Check your dryer before turning it on to avoid killing your cat. For cats who are especially insistent, a little aversion therapy is in order. When you see your cat slip in, close the door and bang on the top of the dryer for a few seconds. Let the cat back out.
- **Used dental floss.** It's a killer when swallowed by anyone.
- **Drapery and blind cords.** Most cats love to play with cords, but unfortunately, it's easy for a limb or neck to become entangled. Coil the cords up to the top of the window and pin with a clothes pin or clip.
- **Bags with handles** turn into miniature parachutes when cats get their heads stuck in the handles and panic. Cats can easily injure or kill themselves.
- **Stove tops.** Both gas and electrical stoves can present problems. One preventive measure is to obtain burner covers, available for both kinds.

Most cats will stay away from anything that is actively hot, but you may wish to train them away from the stove by spritzing them with water, or trying other measures used to keep cats off the counters (e.g., a sheet of newspaper covering some mousetraps set upside-down).

Thank you for adopting this animal.

Know that your choice to adopt an animal from JCHS allows us to help another animal in need.

Good luck, and may this cat fill your home with laughter and love as she has ours.