

Enrichment for Household Cats, Part 2

By Sherry Woodard

“Enrichment for Household Cats” covers some basic things that you can do to enhance the quality of life for your indoor cats. This resource offers some additional ideas and products to try out.

Every cat is an individual, so spend time discovering what he or she particularly enjoys. Here are some suggestions:

- Find out if your cat likes petting, being carried around, being gently combed or brushed.
- Read aloud or sing to your cats, and have your children join in.
- Spray cat pheromone (lightly!) on your cat’s bedding and furniture. One commonly used brand is Feliway; it’s a synthetic copy of the feline facial pheromone, which is used by cats to mark their territory as safe and secure. Another brand of feline pheromone that comes in a collar is NurtureCALM 24/7.
- Provide cat furniture for climbing and romping. You can buy ready-made cat trees and other furniture that range in cost from cheap to expensive, but you don’t have to go that route. Some cats are just as happy with cardboard boxes and paper bags to investigate and play in. There are many terrific websites with instructions for making your own cat furniture; simply do a search for “how to make cat furniture.”
- To treat your cat to fresh catnip, grow it yourself. Try catnip-filled toys, too.
- Grow wheat grass for your cat to chomp on. To purchase an organic pet grass kit, go to www.wheatgrasskits.com/pet_grass.htm.
- Place a bird feeder outside a window where your cat can watch the birds.
- Teach your cat to come when called, using treats as a reward.
- To allow your cat to safely enjoy time outdoors, teach her to walk on lead wearing a harness. You can buy harnesses made especially for cats at pet



supply stores. Be careful to properly fit the harness so the cat doesn't slip out of it. Train your cat inside your house to be relaxed in the harness and on the lead before adding outside adventures.

- There are many other options for cats to spend time outdoors safely. Google "catios" to get some ideas for structures you can purchase or build. Another option that works well for many cats is a pet stroller. Strollers can be found on many websites; simply do a search for "pet stroller."
- If you crate train your cat, going to the vet won't be so stressful. See "Crate Training Your Cat" for tips on how to make it fun.
- Buy your cat a drinking fountain if she likes to drink running water from the faucet. (Drinkwell is one brand.)
- To offer your cat a better view and a spot to sunbathe, buy a window perch (available at pet supply stores) or make one yourself.
- Some cats even enjoy using exercise wheels; for more information, check out www.catwheelcompany.com.
- If you have only one cat, consider getting a second feline to give your cat someone to play with when you're not at home. Try fostering another cat first if you're not sure you want to adopt right away. If you foster, your cat can help choose the new family member.
- In nature, the behavior that occupies the majority of cats' time is searching for food. Indoor cats have this same instinctual urge. If it's possible in your home, hide little bits of food all around the house so your cat can do the normal feline "work" of finding food. It's an enjoyable activity that gives your cat something interesting to do and satisfies that particular aspect of a cat's nature.
- Most important of all: Spend time interacting with your cat doing things you both enjoy!

Sherry Woodard is the animal behavior and training consultant at Best Friends. She develops resources and provides consulting services nationally to help achieve Best Friends' No More Homeless Pets mission.

See also: Preventing Behavior Problems in Your Cat
 Enrichment for Household Cats