

## CATS LIKE - LARGE, CLEAN LITTER BOXES & soft barely sented/unsented litter

Start out without a cover on the box, possibly even a disposable one while kitty is getting comfortable in your home. If your home is two story have boxes upstairs & down. If multiple cats have extra boxes at least in the beginning until you are SURE cats are comfortable sharing boxes.

Cat Litter Boxes come in all sizes, shapes & prices

Choosing a litterbox that your cat likes is crucial to a happy cat & household

*NOT your only cat box or your first →*



*Automatic boxes are great but start out with them off & NOT for kittens!!*

*Plastic Storage Containers work, sometimes a hole is cut*



*Disposables*

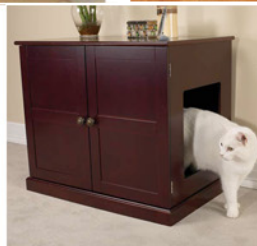
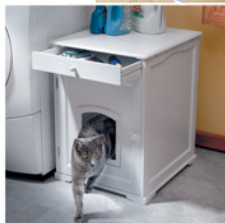
As my vet says, you clean your bathroom at least once a week, do the same for your kitty. This means dump all litter, wash box and replace with clean litter, forget liners they aren't needed.

## BOXES CAN BE HIDDEN WITH CLEVER FURNITURE or COVERS

*(These came from websites listed below, many others available.)*



LC900 Wainscoting



[www.modernistcat.com](http://www.modernistcat.com)

[www.allpetfurniture.com](http://www.allpetfurniture.com)  
[www.lovemypetsupply.com](http://www.lovemypetsupply.com)  
[www.MyCatsHeaven.com](http://www.MyCatsHeaven.com)  
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[www.improvementscatalog.com](http://www.improvementscatalog.com)  
[www.designercatbox.com](http://www.designercatbox.com)  
[www.petco.com](http://www.petco.com) & many, others...

## SOLVING LITTER BOX PROBLEMS, PART 1

One of the more frequent problems that cat owners face at one time or another is that of a cat refusing to use the litter box, even after using it for years in the past. This behavior may nearly always be corrected with proper attention to the cat's health and environment.

The first thing to do is to rule out a physical problem by taking your cat to a veterinarian for a physical examination. Common medical causes for inappropriate elimination is a urinary tract infection or crystals in the urine, either of which can make urination very painful. Cats often associate this pain with the litter box and begin to avoid it. Left untreated, a urinary tract infection or blockage from crystals can cause permanent damage or be fatal, so do NOT delay in seeking medical attention.

Once you've ruled out medical issues, you will need to turn your attention to the cat's environment. Cats may stop using the litter box because of a radical change in their surroundings, such as the introduction of a new pet, moving homes, rearranging furniture, new person in household, remodeling, or even a new baby. In the best case scenario, you will plan ahead and ease the transition. For instance, if you move, introduce your cat to the new home the same way you would bring an entirely new animal in—start in a confined, isolated space and gradually let the cat explore his or her new surroundings. If you remodel your house, keep the cat isolated from the area and only when it is complete should you slowly re-introduce him to the area. For more details see chapter on *Introducing New Kitty to Your Home*.

Cats may also stop using the litter box because they are dissatisfied with the type of box or type of litter you use. A change in the box or litter can cause them to stop using it; try and stay consistent for the life of the cat. If you do want to change do it gradually by adding just a little of the new litter into the box and over time add more and more until you have made the transition. If this doesn't work, go back to the first litter.

Some cats even like to have two boxes—one for each function. I have been told this especially true of Persian cats. Some cats like covered boxes, others like open ones. Some don't want to share a box,

others don't mind at all. Some cats don't like liners or scented litter. In short, you will need to be prepared to experiment and slowly rule things out.

Studies done by veterinary schools have shown that most cats prefer fine, smooth unscented or barely scented litter in a clean box. If you are bringing a new cat into the home we recommend using a fine unscented litter in a large box without a liner. Liners can tear with the cats claws.

Also our vets recommend cleaning the box every week with a mild detergent, not strong bleach, and filling with clean litter. Once vet once said to me, you clean your bathroom every week don't you, well you cats wants the same level of cleanliness. A dirty litter box is another reason cats mess outside the box.

Anytime your cat messes outside the box, clean the soiled area promptly and thoroughly (as otherwise the cat may continue using the area as a de facto bathroom) and use positive reinforcement to re-introduce your cat to the litter box. Find urine stains with a fluorescent black light, available at hardware and pet supply stores. The stains will glow under the black light. Once you locate a stain, clean it with an enzymatic cleaner made especially for pet odors, available at pet supply stores. Don't use ammonia or other strong-smelling household cleaners. These will encourage your cat to re-mark in that area.

You may also want to isolate the cat to retrain—more on that on the last page of Litter Box Issues, Part 2.

***Do not yell at or strike your cat if he or she does not use the litter box.*** Litter box problems are almost always temporary and reversible, but a cat can develop litter box aversion if it associates elimination with punishment. While you aren't expected to celebrate if your cats pees on your sofa, it will only make matters worse if you punish the cat.

Animals don't understand punishment after the fact, even if it's only seconds later. If you are lucky enough to catch her in the cat, interrupt by making a startling noise but be careful not to scare her. Immediately take her to where the litter box is located and set her on the floor in front of it. If she wanders over to the litter box, wait and praise her after she eliminates in the box. If she takes off in another direction, she may want privacy, so watch from afar until she goes back

to the litter box and eliminates, then praise her when she does. If she doesn't go to it, consider isolating her in the bathroom with the litter box for a time.

### Steps to Avoid Litter Box Aversion

Your cat may have decided that the litter box is an unpleasant place to eliminate if the box is not clean enough for her, if she has been started by a noise while using the box, if she has been “ambushed” while in the box either by another cat, a child, a dog, or by you, or if she associates elimination with unpleasantness.

- Keep the litter box extremely clean. Scoop at least once a day, twice is better. Change the litter completely every week and wash the box with a mild detergent. Cats have an extremely sensitive sense of smell so if you can smell the box, from the cat's perspective it must really reek.
- You should have at least one litter box for every two cats. If your home is two story we recommend one upstairs and one downstairs.
- Add a new box in a different location than the old one and use a different type of litter in the new box. Because your cat has decided that her old litter box is unpleasant, you'll want to make the new one different enough that she doesn't simply apply the old, negative associations to the new box.
- Sometimes it's the location of the box that is a problem. Make sure the litter box isn't near an appliance that makes noise or other wise is in a noisy area. Some cats will not use a box in the laundry room if the washer or dryer are running, they want a more quiet location.
- If ambushing is a problem, try to create more than one exit from the litter box inclosure or area, so that if the “ambusher” is waiting by one exit your cat always has an escape route.

### Surface Preferences

All animals develop preferences for a particular surface on which they like to eliminate. These preferences may be established early in life, but they may also change for reasons that we don't always understand. Your cat may have a surface preference if she consistently eliminates on a particular texture, such as a soft-textured surface (carpet, bedding or clothing) or a slick-textured surface (such as tile, bathtubs or sinks).

- If your cat is eliminating on soft surfaces, try using a high quality, scoopable litter that is soft and fine, preferably unscented. Petco's Pet Gold is like this. Put a soft rug under the litter box.
- If your cat is eliminating on slick, smooth surfaces, try putting just a very thin layer of litter at one end of the box, leaving the other end bare and put the box on a hard floor. You might also use a large plastic storage container with a smooth bottom for the litter box.
- If your cat has a history of being outdoors, add some soil to the litter box.

You can also try making the area where she has been inappropriately eliminating aversive to her by covering it with an upside-down carpet runner or mat or aluminum foil or by placing citrus-scented cotton balls over the area.

There is also a litter on the market called Dr. Elsey's Cat Attract that is guaranteed or your money back to attract cats to the box. Most cats love it.

If your cat is having litter box problems, don't worry—you are not alone. The internet is full of good information and suggests on what to do.

One of my favorite is ***The Litter Box From Your Cat's Point of View*** by Lisa A. Pierson, DVM at this link: <http://www.catinfo.org/?link=litterbox> This is extremely thorough, I wish I had room to reprint the entire web article in this adoption package.

### ***Litterbox, Litterbox, Where Are You Litterbox?***

There are a few other things to keep in mind about the litterbox. Is it located in the right area? Cats do not like to have their litterbox too close to their food and bedding. They do like to have a consistent and private place to do their business. So don't put the box in the busiest room of your house.

Occasionally there may be something about the box or location of the box that inhibits the cat from using it. I remember one woman who accidentally dropped a roll of toilet paper on the cat's head while he was in the box. Another person turned on the shower before closing the curtain and the cat got sprayed with water while in the litterbox. Both of these cats were afraid to even go into the bathroom, much less use the litterbox there after these experiences. We had to temporarily put the boxes just outside the bathroom door.

It may seem like common sense, but is the box easy for the cat to get to? I'm surprised at how many owners keep the box in a closet and then forget to leave the closet door open!

Another owner kept moving the box every day trying to find a place where his dog could not get into it. The dog probably enjoyed the challenge of the search but I'm sure the cat didn't.

And what about the litter itself? Every cat has his own likes and dislikes, but most cats like clean, absorbant litter that feels and smells natural to them. Sometimes they are repelled by fancy litters with additives and perfumes that are more for our benefit than for the cat's.

### ***I've Cleaned Up the Act, But ...***

OK, so you have a clean litterbox with the right litter and it's located in a quiet, private, easy-to-get-to place. Now what? Many cats won't magically start using their box again just because you've started keeping it clean.

First of all, the cat won't know that the box is really clean. After all, it's been dirty for the last six months so why should things be any different now? He will just assume it's still dirty and go straight to where he knows it will be clean. Whenever the cat pees in the closet or poops under the piano, you don't let it sit there for a week. You clean it up immediately! The cat keeps going back there because he knows it's always clean.

I drive from San Francisco to Los Angeles a lot and there are a few gas stations along the way that I simply don't stop at anymore because I've learned from experience that their facilities are never clean. I'm not going to waste my time stopping to check them out, even if they posted a sign that read, "Attention! Our bathrooms have been cleaned!" I would just laugh and drive right on by. So your cat too probably looks at the litterbox, laughs and cruises right on by.

Some owners go berserk when they find puddles or piles somewhere in the house. Often times they scream, grab the cat and throw her in the litterbox - or they grab the cat's paws and force her to dig in the litter. Cats hate to be forced into doing anything. These cats avoid the box because they have learned that it's a torture chamber. They associate the box with unpleasant experiences.

In order to turn this all around, you must convince the cat that the litterbox is both a clean and pleasant place to be. Whenever your cat is hungry or in a playful mood, get out a special treat or her favorite toy and lure her near her box.

If those gas stations had a sign that read, "Ten dollars to everyone who checks out our facilities," you bet I wouldn't just drive by and laugh. These guys are actively trying to convince me that they've changed their ways and their human litterboxes are clean and pleasant. You must apply the same bribery techniques and principles to your cat.

Most hungry cats will happily follow a chunk of turkey dangling in front of their nose. Entice kitty to follow the food or a toy to his box, then enthusiastically praise and reward kitty when you get to the box. Within a short time, kitty will get the hang of the game and you can begin calling him to come towards you and the box from different locations in your home. Work especially hard to call kitty away from areas he has soiled in the past. When he arrives at the box, profusely praise and reward him. Now kitty will see that not only is the box clean, but it's also a rewarding and pleasant place to be. The next step is to praise and reward him for times he actually uses his box.

### ***What Goes In, Must Come Out***

We expect cats to train themselves because cats are instinctively clean. Litterbox training will progress much more quickly if you can reward and praise the cat when he is using his box. The timing of the reward is extremely important. In order to effectively reward the cat for using the box, you must *be there* when

he uses the box.

If you must be there to reward him, then obviously you need to know when he has to go, or you'll be hanging around the litterbox forever. This brings up the importance of schedules. A cat's physical system is like clock work. If the input is at the same time every day, the output will take on a corresponding schedule. Once you know the approximate time your cat will need to eliminate, you can arrange to be present to reward and praise him when he eliminates in the box.

Now you only have to hang around the box for about 15 minutes instead of all day long. If you keep an eye on your cat during this time, you can also prevent him from going near those places that he used to soil.

### ***If It's Still Not Working***

For severe litterbox problems, it may be necessary to confine your cat with a litterbox, her toys, scratching post and bed to one room for a few days. By confining your cat, she can more quickly learn to use her box. First, if you and your cat are both in the same room, then it will be easier for you to keep an eye on her, so it will be easier for you to praise and reward her at the exact right moment.

Second, if you're not there, the chances are high that she will use the box on her own. If given the choice of using litter or a linoleum or tile floor, your cat will choose the litter which absorbs the urine and gives her the opportunity and ability to cover her feces.

Cats are creatures of habit. They usually return to the same places to do their business.

So additionally, confinement is used to help break the cat's habit of eliminating in inappropriate areas. If she doesn't have access to these areas, then she doesn't have the opportunity to keep reinforcing her old habit.

If you are turned off to the idea of confinement, then you probably don't really understand it. Maybe you've tried it in the past, went about it the wrong way and had a bad experience, or the cat had a bad experience. If your attitude is that confinement is a prison sentence, then it is not going to work. Confinement should be a positive and rewarding training experience. Review the section that explains the use and purposes of temporary confinement.

### Summary

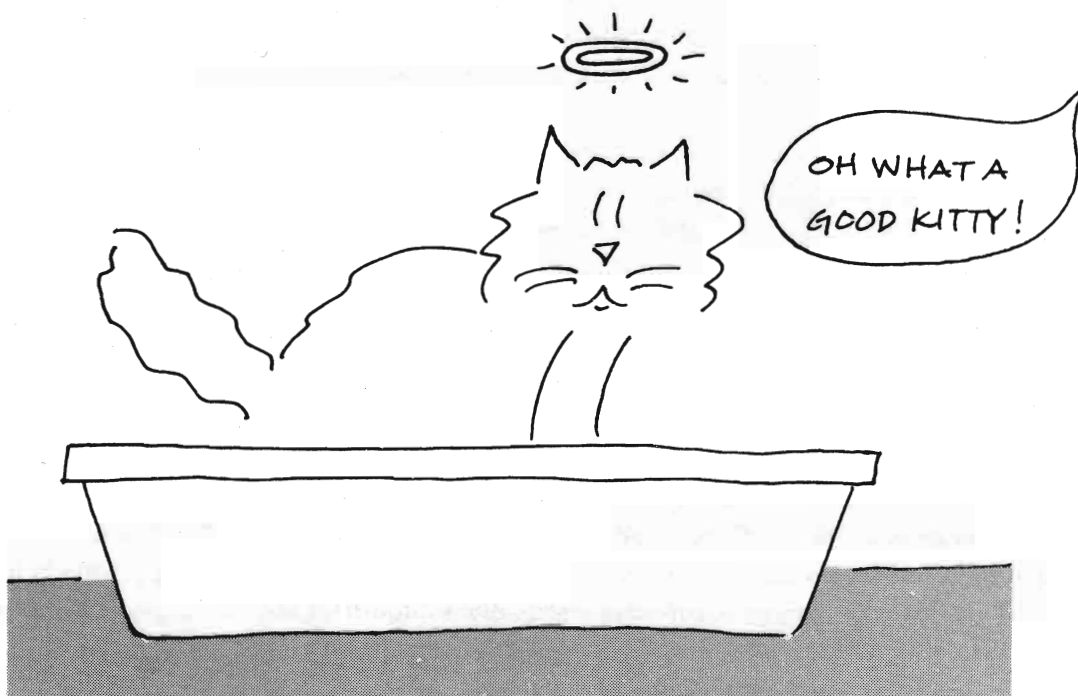
1. The litterbox must always be clean. Sometimes all it can take is neglecting the box just once and the cat will feel forced to go

somewhere else. Now you have to start all over again retraining your cat to use his box. So don't forget to clean the box without fail.

2. Make sure you have the right number of litterboxes in appropriate locations with the right litter.

3. Praise and reward your cat whenever you see her use her box. During initial training, it is important to be present as much as possible to reward your cat when she uses the box. Once your cat is trained, it is still equally as important to maintain the training by regularly praising your cat anytime you see her use the box. If you forget to reward your cat, she may forget to use her box. Never take good behavior for granted or you may find yourself having to retrain your cat to use her box.

4. Training may require the use of confinement. This is only a temporary measure to speed up the training process and to help break bad habits.



One way to prevent bad habits from forming and also a method of breaking already established habits is through the use of confinement. Confinement is no different than putting a baby in a play pen. When mom is cooking dinner in the kitchen and can't watch baby, she puts him in a playpen so he stays out of trouble and doesn't get hurt. She doesn't expect the baby to know that the stove is hot or that he could fall down the stairs. She doesn't expect the baby to stay out of trouble without supervision. Why do we expect more from our cats than we do from our own children? We want them to read our minds and automatically know what they should and shouldn't do.

The playpen is not a jail. When children get used to it, they learn to entertain themselves and enjoy their playpen. That's why they're called playpens. When you confine your cat, you should have the same attitude. Make it a special place for your cat. You should consider it the cat's playroom.

Make the room a pleasant and fun place to be. Introduce it slowly and gradually. Spend time there with your cat until he feels confident in his own special haven. Don't just toss kitty in and walk away. Give your cat things to do in there. Cats really don't mind being confined. After all, how many times have you looked for your kitty only to find her curled up in a dresser drawer that you left open? Cats love to hide in boxes, paper bags and hang out on the top shelf of the linen closet. Now these spaces are really confined. You are going to give your cat much more space than that.

The cat is not going to be confined forever, but just until she can be trusted to have full freedom of the house. Part of confinement is prevention. You may as well prevent having

your entire house become a huge litterbox while the cat is being litterbox-trained. Until our human babies are potty trained, we put diapers on them to prevent accidents. With children, we are very prevention oriented, so why shouldn't we be that way with our cats?

Confinement is prevention, but equally as important, confinement also helps the cat develop good habits. If the only available scratching item in the playroom is a scratching post, then kitty will develop a habit of scratching it simply because there is nothing else there to scratch on. The more the cat scratches the post, the stronger that habit becomes. The longer the cat is prevented from scratching a couch, the more likely that habit will be broken.

There are three purposes for confinement. First, it protects your property. Your cat cannot scratch your couch because the couch is not in the cat's playroom. Second, it protects your cat. Kitty doesn't know that plants and chemicals can be poisonous and that electric cords can kill. Third, it allows the development of good habits while at the same time breaks and prevents bad habits from forming.

In order to accomplish these three things, the cat's playroom should not have anything in it that you don't want destroyed; it should not have anything in it that can harm the cat; it should not have anything in it that you don't want the cat to develop a habit of eating, scratching, soiling, playing with, sleeping on or whatever. It should have lots of toys, two or more scratching/climbing posts, bedding, a litterbox, food and water bowls. This is the cat's playroom, not a jail. It is only temporary until kitty can be trusted to have full run of your home.