



# Entertain your Kitties' brains!

## *Environmental Enrichment Suggestions*

Fundamentally Feline  
Ingrid Johnson, CCBC  
[www.FundamentallyFeline.com](http://www.FundamentallyFeline.com)

We advocate indoor only cats. This lifestyle keeps them healthier, safer and living longer lives. However, cats may get bored or frustrated being kept inside. Below are some suggestions for keeping them active, stimulated and happy. Remember that cats are very prey specific, so trying different varieties of toys is important to find just what your cat likes to hunt.

### **Alphabet Magnets**

Place these on the lower half of the fridge, oven, dishwasher, or on a magnetic board for your cat to bat around. You can find these at most toy stores.

### **Birds and Bees**

For visual entertainment attract birds or squirrels with strategic placement of bird and squirrel feeders outside windows and screened porches. For nighttime viewing, try leaving a porch light on to attract flying insects. This may help you sleep better if your cat is active at night.

### **Bringing the Outside In**

As long as your cat is current on vaccinations and deworming, bring in tree branches, rocks, leaves, things from the outdoors to pique their senses. Try hiding treats around or under these items for extra fun, or fill a box with leaves and throw a handful of treats in for your cat to forage. Additionally, you may purchase live catnip or grass plants from most PetSmart locations. These plants provide instant gratification and cost about \$5.00 each.

### **Cat Carrier**

Try leaving your cat's carrier out in the home all the time. Make it inviting by placing bedding and/or treats inside for your cat to enjoy. This will also desensitize your cat to the carrier making trips to the vet easier for both of you. Clicker training is a positive way to train your cat to willingly enter their cat carrier. Teaching this could save their life in case of an emergency!

### **Catnip Marinade**

Place all soft fuzzy toys in container with catnip to "marinate". You can do this as often as needed to refresh the scent. This can be financially helpful because you won't have to buy new toys as often.

### **Chirping Fuzzy Mice and Birds**

There are many versions of these motion activated toys. Some chirp like live mice, some move around and some have flashing lights.

### **Clicker Training**

Clicker training can be used as both an enrichment tool and as a training aid to fix unwanted behaviors. Cats are incredibly intelligent and trainable we simply have to create that expectation! Clicker training can help control less desirable behaviors such as counter surfing or inappropriate scratching or teach them to run an agility course for fun and exercise! Cats can be trained to sit, come, hi-five, shake even walk on a leash and harness. Much like their canine counterparts, training your cat stimulates the brain, gives them a job to do and gives them a more enriched life. A good reference book is "Training Your Cat" by Dr. Kersti Seksel or "Naughty No More" by Marilyn Krieger. Karen Pryor is also the go to source for all thing clicker related!

### ***Drinking Fountain***

There are several different water fountains for cats that simulate drinking from a stream or water faucet. The model we prefer is the Drinkwell Pet Fountain. It can be easily taken apart and cleaned, has charcoal filters that can be replaced as needed and you can purchase an optional reservoir which is great for multi-cat households or cats that require lots of fresh water. Retail price starts at approximately \$49.99 and can be ordered directly from the manufacturer at [www.vetventures.com](http://www.vetventures.com) or by calling 866-322-2530. We also like the stainless steel fountains as they are not porous, even easier to clean and dishwasher safe! Pioneer Pet makes some nice stainless fountains.

### ***Feline Furniture***

Cat Condos will give your cat a place of their own, increase vertical space in your home and create "safe zones" from dogs, children or other cats. Our favorite condos are from [www.AngelicalCat.com](http://www.AngelicalCat.com), they carry a wide array of styles, sizes and colors. You may reach Angelical Cat by phone at 954-747-3629. Some other websites we recommend are [www.TrendyCat.com](http://www.TrendyCat.com), [www.KittyPod.com](http://www.KittyPod.com) and [www.TheRefinedFeline.com](http://www.TheRefinedFeline.com). Scratching posts and horizontal cardboard scratching pads give your cat an appropriate surface to scratch. The "Cat's Meow Scratching Post" is available for retail sale at Paws Whiskers & Claws, The Feline Hospital in Marietta, Ga. Cardboard scratchers are available at most pet retail outlets.

### ***Fish Tanks***

Having a fish tank is an excellent way to keep your cat occupied, especially at night when you are trying to sleep. Obviously, you'll want to make sure to have a secure lid to keep fish safe. Also, make sure you are prepared for the effort of caring for additional pets.

### ***Foraging Toys***

These are toys that must be manipulated for your cat to obtain a food reward. Unfortunately, there are not nearly as many styles of foraging toys commercially available for cats as there are for their canine counterparts. You can make your own foraging toys by using small plastic household containers and cutting out holes that are slightly larger than the size of the food/treats that you will put inside. Another homemade variation would be a shoebox with holes cut out about the size of a ping pong ball and then fill with treats and a few ping pong balls as an "obstacle". Be sure to tape the lid on. There are a variety of foraging toys available at Paws Whiskers & Claws, The Feline Hospital. To shop for toys and to learn more about foraging visit [www.FundamentallyFeline.com](http://www.FundamentallyFeline.com)

### ***Hunting***

In addition to foraging, satisfy your cat's prey drive, by hiding treats or food around the house, in places your cat frequents such as: on top of their scratching post, cat condos, window seats or anywhere you know they will seek it out or stumble upon it.

### ***Interactive Toys***

These are toys that allow you and your cat to play together and often provide great exercise for your cat. The Feline Flyer is a feather toy that mimics a bird and the Dragonfly is a toy on a wire creating erratic movement. A good old fashion piece of string works great too-just make sure to always put it away when playtime is over. If ingested, string or ribbon can cause an intestinal obstruction which is very dangerous. There are a myriad of interactive toys available, find the one that peeks your cat's prey drive! Play with your cat daily!

### **Keepin' It Fresh**

While cats don't like drastic changes to their routine or environment, subtle changes can be good. Moving the furniture around or changing a cat condo from one window to another can be stimulating and create interest instead of stress.

### **Light-up Laser Balls**

Just like the chirping fuzzy mice and birds above, there are many different motion activated balls that provide hours of entertainment for cats by flashing when touched or rolled.

### **Motorized Toys**

There are many motorized toys available on the market. The Panic Mouse has been previously featured in *Catnip* magazine as "Best Motorized Toy" of the year. It is "...an electronic mouse that randomly waves a wand and attached spider toy through the air for your cat to chase and grab, mimicking a human waving a wand toy. The wand moves in different directions and at different speeds, sometimes pausing. It is also height and speed adjustable." The Panic Mouse as well as other great motorized toys can be ordered at [www.PanicMouseInc.com](http://www.PanicMouseInc.com) or by calling 951-506-3643 and costs approximately \$30.00. The Fling-a-ma-string, The Undercover Mouse, and many others can provide hours of automatic fun for your feline friend. Remember your cat should always be supervised during play-do not leave these toys turned on when you are not home.

### **Nature Videos/Music**

Some cats enjoy watching television, especially if it's geared for them. They'll love the sounds and sights of nature videos or try leaving the television tuned to Animal Planet. There are also videos produced for cats that feature aquariums, birds and squirrels. You can purchase DVD's designed exclusively for cats or try leaving classical music playing to soothe your cat when you are not home.

### **Nightlights**

Cats cannot see in the dark, however cats can see well in about 1/8<sup>th</sup> of the light required by a human. This is why cats are most active and hunt at dawn and dusk (called crepuscular). This lighting can be mimicked at home by placing nightlights by food, litter box or sleeping areas. This will benefit all cats, particularly those who are geriatric, and it may also decrease intercat aggression.

### **Old Standbys**

Cats love investigating things like cardboard boxes, paper bags, newspaper tents and cardboard rolls from paper towels or toilet paper. You can also try putting toys or treats inside the cardboard rolls thus turning them into foraging toys.

### **Outdoor Enclosures**

Even indoor cats can enjoy the outdoors safely through screened in porches, screened in decks, window seats, chain link enclosures ([www.HabitatHaven.com](http://www.HabitatHaven.com)) or Kitty Walks (877-548-8905 or [www.KittyWalkSystems.com](http://www.KittyWalkSystems.com)). The most important thing is to ensure that the enclosure is secure, covered on all four sides and has a roof or ceiling so that cats can't escape. The Purrfect Fence ([www.PurrfectFence.com](http://www.PurrfectFence.com)) does not have a roof but does offer a secure "Houdini-Proof" arch that prevents cats from being able to scale the fence. If you allow

your cats outdoor time in an enclosure or on a leash and harness, make sure your cats are current on vaccines, flea control and are dewormed regularly.

### ***Ping-Pong Balls***

Try putting 2 or more ping-pong balls in a bathtub. Cats will love jumping in and batting them around. This can be a bit noisy, so if the bathtub is near your bedroom, make sure to take them out before you go to sleep. And put the stopper in the tub so the ball does not get stuck.

### ***Strollin'***

Have you ever considered taking your cats for walk? A cat stroller is the perfect way to do this! These strollers are 100% screened in with pet proof screening and often have many of the same features as an infant stroller such as: collapsibility for easy storage, cup holders, lightweight, etc. If you walk your dog take kitty with you!

### ***Vertical Space***

Similar to a free standing cat condo, vertical space allows your cat the comfort of navigating their space without having to touch the ground. Cats feel more secure when they are up high. The nice thing about vertical space verses a cat condo is that it does not take up a foot print on your floor. It is a series of runs, perches, and tall scratch poles that allow the cat to cruise from wall to wall and room to room, all with the ability to survey the home from a high vantage point! To learn more visit [www.FundamentallyFeline.com](http://www.FundamentallyFeline.com)

### ***Water Fun***

Place small wind up toys in a sink filled with water; also try any items that float like ping-pong balls, or a large bright marble so they have to "go fishing" for it. You can find wind up toys in the infant bath section of toy or department stores.