



 **ADOPTING A CAT**  
ain't misbehavin!

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### **Cat behaviour issues**

These are a few tips to help you deal with common cat behaviour issues. For more details, consult with your veterinarian, an animal behaviourist or humane trainer.

### **She won't use the litter box!**

Medical conditions, such as diarrhea or bladder problems, may cause litter box issues. If your cat stops using the litter box, take her to your veterinarian to rule out any medical problems.

Kittens are usually trained by their mothers to have proper litter box etiquette. If your cat seems untrained, try confining her in a small room, such as a bathroom, with her litter box, bed and food bowls. Put her bed and bowls as far from the litter box as possible within this small room. The confinement encourages your cat to use the litter box; if she chooses not to use it, she risks soiling near her food. Cats are clean animals by nature and the thought of soiling near their food is offensive. Try this method for approximately two weeks. This is NOT punishment! Don't leave her alone in the room for extended periods. If it doesn't seem to be working, or if your cat reverts back to not using the litter box once let out of the smaller room, there may be other reasons for her behaviour, and you should consult your veterinarian.

Cats need clean litter, in a clean litter box, in a location that is relatively quiet and easily accessible. Litter must be cleaned daily, and the litter should be changed at least once a week. Unneutered males or unspayed females may mark their territory - your house - to ward off intruders or to attract mates. Stress due to new pets in the house, visitors, redecorating or moving can cause inappropriate litter box habits. Try to eliminate the stressors, or provide your cat with "his own space," a private spot with all his "cat stuff:" litter box, toys, bed and scratching post.

For more information read [Top 10 Tips to Help Solve Litter Box Dilemmas](#).

### **He's scratching and clawing me and/or my furniture!**

Cats have a natural desire to scratch and claw. If he's scratching your furniture or carpeting, provide him with a sturdy scratching post and place toys and catnip around it to entice him. Praise and reward him for using it. Keep a spray bottle full of water handy, and anytime you

catch him scratching inappropriately, spray him with the water, but try not to let him see that it's you spraying him. Most cats find this startling and offensive, and will assume that the couch is what sprayed them. If he catches on that it's you spraying him, he will quickly learn that it's safe to scratch the furniture when you're not around. Using this method consistently will usually deter him from this bad habit. If the spray bottle doesn't seem to be doing the trick, apply double-sided tape, aluminum foil or vinyl sheeting to the areas that your cat is scratching. Cats are quite finicky about their paws, and don't like the feel of these materials.

If the cat is scratching and clawing you, ensure that he is provided with alternative sources for play. This bad habit usually begins when the cat is a kitten, and he is encouraged to chase and play with people's hands and fingers. This may seem cute when your kitten is tiny, but once he's a full-grown adult, with adult teeth and claws, the game becomes a lot less fun, and a lot more painful. A balled up pair of socks is usually a good substitute item for cats to grab and hold with all four paws. You can also cover your hands with a bad-tasting spray or lotion called "Bitter Apple", available at most pet supply stores.

Trim your cat's nails every week or two; just trim the sharp ends of the nail, and be sure not to cut too close to the pink area. Ask your veterinarian to demonstrate the proper technique.

### **She's stalking me and playing late at night!**

Things to consider:

- Your cat may be bored because she is left alone for too long during the day with nothing to do.
- Cats need at least 15 minutes of daily active play time and kittens need even more than that.
- Cats enjoy a variety of safe toys, free of strings or yarn that can be swallowed and cause health problems. Toys that can be batted and rolled around are the most popular, and encourage lots of active movement around the house while you're not there.
- Cats are naturally active at night, so have your play sessions in the early evening so that when you go to bed, your cat will be tired too.
- Give your cat a scratch post that allows her to look out the window, and place a bird feeder outside the same window. Watching the birds will provide your cat with much-needed mental stimulation, while keeping the birds safely outside of her reach.
- Consider closing your bedroom door when you go to sleep. This will send a clear message that you're not interested in playing.

You can also consider adding another cat to your household, but should first consider the following questions:

1. Can you afford the added expenses that come with adding another cat to your household?
2. Would your resident cat welcome the addition of another feline? A younger cat may be happy to have a companion to play with, but an older cat may not be interested in sharing his house with a young spunky kitten or younger cat. Your resident cat **MUST** be your primary consideration.

3. Getting another cat won't necessarily stop the night-time antics - you may simply end-up with two cats frolicking in the wee hours of the morning.

**He's ruining the plants!**

Cats are fascinated with anything that moves when they touch it. Plants should be moved out of his reach, so that he cannot claw them or eat them. Try growing catnip or wheat grass for him. If he is digging or urinating in the soil around your plants, cover the dirt with fine gauge wire or gravel. If you catch your cat in the act, you can discourage his behaviour with a squirt from a water bottle.

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