

# How to Enrich the Life of a Bored Indoor Cat

**M**any indoor cats are bored with their life. And when bored, they can get into trouble as they try to entertain themselves. In addition to being bored, cats often get lazy and put on extra weight when they don't have anything to do during their day. The following strategies can help your indoor cat lead a healthier, more fulfilled life.



By Kelley Bollen

- **Food gathering:** Cats are hunters so instead of feeding your cats out of bowls, hide their food around the house so they can search for it. You can hide individual kibbles or small piles. Your cat's acute sense of smell will allow them to find the food. Vary your hiding places daily. This is an excellent form of mental and physical stimulation. You can also put the kibble food in feeder balls so that your cats have to work for their food. There are many different kinds of cat feeder balls available but any small ball with a hole cut out can be used.
- **Water gathering:** Cats prefer to drink running water so instead of using a bowl, purchase a cat water fountain so that drinking is more stimulating.
- **Catnip & silver vine:** Only about 60% of cats respond to catnip but if yours is one of them, provide a small pile of catnip several times each week. Silver vine is another plant-based product that stimulates cats in a positive way.
- **Visual stimulation:** Provide your cat with a way to observe the outside world. This can be achieved by placing a cat tree in front of the windows or using a cat bed that connects to the window with suction cups. Placing bird feeders outside of the windows will give your cats something interesting to watch.
- **Auditory stimulation:** Purchase a bird song CD and play it occasionally for a few minutes. The sound of birds is biologically significant to cats.
- **Play stimulation:** Provide your cat with a rigorous play session once a day at roughly the same time (cats like routine). The sessions only have to be five to 10 minutes long. Some suggestions for play include laser pointers (make sure to end the game by landing the laser beam onto a toy so your cat can "capture" the prey); fishing pole and feather dancer type toys; and tossed balls, cat toys, pipe cleaners, bottle caps, etc.
- **Scratching posts:** Scratching is a normal cat behavior that serves many functions for your cat. Providing a variety of interesting scratching posts around the house will give your cats the opportunity to perform this natural behavior without ruining your furniture. Provide both vertical and horizontal scratching posts that are made out of a variety of materials (e.g. corrugated cardboard, sisal rope, natural wood, or loop-less carpet).
- **Clicker training:** Yes, you can train your cat! Clicker training involves first pairing the sound of a clicker (available in stores and online) with the delivery of a treat. The "click" sound is then used to tell the cat exactly which behavior earned the food reward. Clicker training is positive, fun and mentally stimulating. There are books and websites that teach cat owners how to use this technique.



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