

Your Home Is Your Cat's Comfort Zone

When a cat's environment causes stress, they can develop health problems. Meeting the needs of your feline friend means creating a space that lets them mimic their natural behaviours. You don't need to turn your home upside down to help your cat feel at home, a few changes can make all the difference.

The Five Systems of Feline Environmental Needs

1 The Nutritional System

Cats need to feel safe and engaged when they eat and drink. For multi-cat households, this can mean feeding cats in separate locations, or away from loud appliances.

The Food Dish:

Place the bowl in a quiet area. Try putting the bowl in a high place or mixing in puzzle toys that release food. In multi-cat homes, try using microchip feeders to ensure cats eat from their own bowl.

The Water Dish:

The food and water don't need to be side by side. Keep it in a quiet place – and make sure to keep it filled.

2 The Elimination System

Normal feline elimination follows a behaviour sequence, starting with pre-elimination digging, elimination posturing, and post elimination digging and covering. Interruptions to this routine can cause stress that affects healthy urination.

Litterbox:

Position in a discreet, low traffic area with at least 2 exit points, away from food, water and any loud appliances. Some cats may prefer different types of litter. And remember to keep the box clean!

3 The Physical Resource System

Cats like a reasonable level of certainty, consistency, and predictability from their physical environments. This usually means a combination of vantage points, resting areas, and places to exercise.

Sleep area:

Keep it quiet and warm. Look for beds with three high sides.

Climbing:

Cats love to climb things like stairs, freestanding cupboards, shelves and cat trees.

4 The Social System

Cats have social relationships with all other beings living in your home. Other pets are seen as predators, competitors, or prey. Other cats are often the biggest source of social conflict, though humans and dogs may also be seen as threats.

Play:

For aloof cats, establish a play routine with chase and pounce toys that don't require touch.

5 The Behavioural System

An environment can encourage or hinder natural scratching, chewing and playing.

Scratching area:

Cats need to scratch to maintain their claws, so try a tall scratching post so they can also do a full body stretch.

Play:

Cats need a variety of predatory play. Rotate toys and games that cats can stalk, chase, pounce on and bite.

No need to call the renovator. Check out the image below for low impact ideas that can turn your home into your cat's happy place.

Match each environmental need to its appropriate spot in the picture below.

Legend

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|--------------|--------------|--------|
| 1 Sleep | 4 Food | 7 Play |
| 2 Climbing | 5 Water | |
| 3 Scratching | 6 Litter box | |

