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Chirrupsandchatter.com

Chirrup and Chatters offers comprehensive behavior solutions, cat training, and educational lectures and workshops for animal professionals

LITTERBOX LESSONS

ABC'S OF LITTERBOXES



A = ACCESSIBLE

- Make sure litterboxes are easily accessible
- Have plenty of litterboxes; a good rule is that the minimum # of litterboxes = # of cats +1 (2 cats = 3 boxes) *Keep in mind, 3 litterboxes right next to each other is one box from a cat's perspective.
- Place litterboxes throughout the home including all levels of a multilevel home
 - Many cats prefer to defecate in one box and urinate in another
 - If a cat, dog, or human is blocking the pathway (purposefully or accidentally) the cats should have another option available.
 - Older cats and cats with medical issues that cause them to go the bathroom frequently require easy access to a litterbox



B = BIG

- Make sure that the litterboxes are big enough to comfortably accommodate your cat:
 - Litterboxes should be 1.5 times the length of your cat and your cat should be able to turn around in it - You wouldn't want to use an airplane sized bathroom and neither does your cat.
- Jumbo sized litterboxes or plastic, under the bed type storage containers often make good box options for adult cats and multi-cat households; uncovered boxes are strongly recommended.
- See below for more suggestions



C = CLEAN

- Keep the boxes clean
- Scoop the litterboxes daily
- Dump and wash the litterboxes with a mild soap every 4-6 weeks. Avoid strong aversive cleaning agents like bleach
- Clumping Clay: Offer clumping clay litter
 - Most cats prefer clumping clay (sand-like) litter over other types of litter
 - Most cats prefer unscented and low dust, dust free litter
 - Let your cat choose which litter they prefer. If your cat prefers a specific litter, do not change it.

CAT FRIENDLY LITTERBOX OPTIONS FOR CATS

When it comes to litterboxes, larger is better. Even the so-called "large" litterboxes sold in pet supply stores are too small for most cats. The litterbox should be 1.5 times the length of your cat's body, so that your cat has room to move around in the box and not have to step in soiled areas.

We recommend using large plastic storage bins instead of commercial litterboxes. You can cut an entrance on one side to provide easier access. The high sides of these bins help contain litter when the cat digs and covers. Some cats, especially older declawed and arthritic cats, can't or don't squat to urinate, and may accidentally urinate or defecate over the side of a smaller box; these bins eliminate that problem.

Purchase clear or transparent bins, especially for multi-cat households. Cats are vulnerable when they are in the litterbox, and it's important that they can see what's around them.



Take note, all entrances are large and low to allow for easier entrance and exit for declawed, senior, and/or cats who are displaying signs of pain.

OTHER APPROPRIATELY SIZED LITTERBOXES INCLUDE



Under-the-bed storage boxes

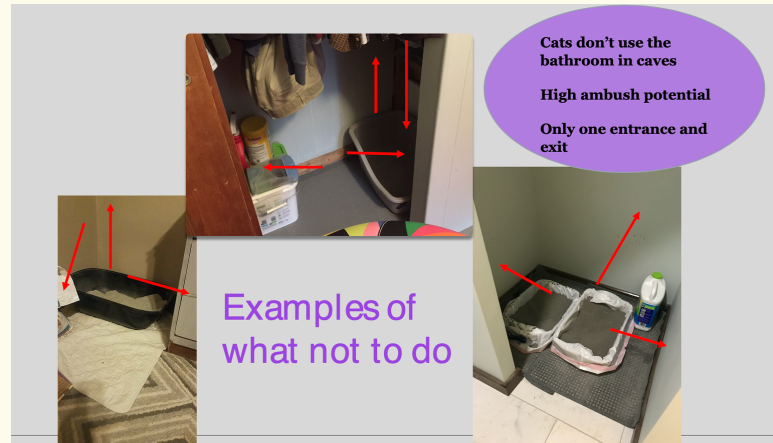


Cement mixing tubs are usually generously sized and lower than most boxes, which make them easier to get in and out of

Set your cats up for success by creating an appropriate feline litterbox setup. Never punish or scold your cat for missing the box. Cats do not act out of spite. If your cat stops using the box, reach out to your veterinarian and Chirrup and Chatter for help!

THINGS TO AVOID

- Clustering litterboxes in one location
- Placing litterboxes next to noisy appliances like washers/dryers/furnaces
- Punishing or scolding your cat for elimination outside of the box. Cats do not act out of spite and when they are missing the box, that's a sign your cat is struggling. Your cat may be struggling due to a medical issue, behavior issue, or in many cases, both.
- Avoid noisy, dark or difficult to reach locations
- Placing all of your cats resources in one area. When placing resources, place them in the areas you rest in the most- If I were to have a lazyboy in my bathroom, it would not get used very often! When placing resources, remember our cats want to be with us, so resources should be placed throughout the home and in areas you are in often (ie living room bedrooms). Ensure there are enough resources for all cats to rest comfortably away from each other. When placing resources, think like a cat!
- Placing litterboxes in the same area as your cat's food and water. You wouldn't want to eat where you eliminate and neither does your cat.
- Only offering your cat covered boxes. Most cats do not prefer covered boxes. Covered boxes are typically not large enough, can trap in scent, and limit a cat's visual field and escape potential. Your cat may prefer a covered appropriately sized box, but be sure to offer them uncovered choices.
- Using litter deodorizers or air fresheners in or near the litterbox.
- Placing litterboxes in ambush areas. These are areas where the cat is blocked off, cornered, and unable to flee. When placing litterboxes, there should be more than one exit and entrance.



ABOUT ME



Tabitha Kucera is an elite fear free and low stress handling certified RVT, CCBC, and KPA-CTP. She is the owner of Chirrup and Chatter cat and dog behavior consulting and training. She loves educating through writing, behavior consulting, and lecturing on all things cats including fear free, kitten socialization, feline friendly handling, working with fearful animals, and more. She enjoys the opportunity to help people better understand and relate to cats.



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