

Litter Training Your Kitten

In order to avoid litter box problems in adult cats, it is extremely important that you get your kitten off to a good start. Fortunately, most kittens are attracted to an area where they can scratch, dig, and perhaps bury their urine and stool and using the litter box usually comes naturally. Of course, if there are other appealing areas, such as plants with soil or a fireplace hearth and your kitten may be tempted to choose those areas instead. Training your kitten well and ensuring that your kitten chooses the litter box over these areas is much more simple than retraining an adult cat with bad habits.

To get your kitten off to a good start, it is a good idea to keep him within eyesight at all times or to confine him to a room with his litter when you cannot supervise. If your kitten stops playing and begins purposely sniffing around, there is a good chance that he needs to eliminate. Gently pick him up, carry him to the litter box, and place him inside. Do this for at least the first two weeks until he has established a regular pattern of using the box. If you have more than one cat, be sure that there is at least one litter box per cat and that all of the litter boxes are in areas easily accessible at all times.

1. Litter

- a) Choose an appropriate litter material. Studies have shown that more cats may prefer clumping litter and you may find it easier to keep clean. However, any other commercial litter material may prove to be equally or even more appealing to your particular kitten. Clumping litter may lead to tracking of material outside the box, and kittens that eat litter should not be given clumping litter.
- b) If the litter you have chosen is not being used by your kitten, try other types. Some kittens may prefer a different texture or type, while scented products may deter others. Traditional clay litter, recycled newspaper litter, a plastic litter pellet (pearls), cedar shavings, or even a little potting soil or sand added to the litter may prove to be more appealing.. You may find that scented litter, the texture of the litter, insufficient cleaning of the litter, or litterbox liners are leading to avoidance.
- c) Litter additives are now available that encourage your kitten to go to and use the litter box. We carry *Cat Attract* and have had reports of good results in both kittens and adult cats.

2. Litterbox

- a) Choose an appropriate litterbox. The box should be big enough that an adult cat can stretch and scratch. Some kittens prefer a litterbox with some privacy so that a hooded box may be preferable. Some kittens find the self-cleaning litterboxes highly appealing, while the product may frighten others.
- b) If your kitten won't use the litterbox, try to determine if there is anything about the litterbox that is deterring him. For example, you may find that a hood on the box, sides that are too high, etc. A litterbox that is too small or cramped, or a motorized self-cleaning litterbox may lead to avoidance.

3. Location

- a) You may have a particular location where you prefer to locate the box, but this must also be acceptable for your kitten. The box should be easily accessible to him especially when it wakes from a nap, or after eating or playing.
- b) If the litter is not being used regularly by your kitten, consider other locations. Is the litterbox located in an area that is inconvenient or hard to access? If you occasionally use the room for other functions it may be inaccessible to the kitten when it needs to be used.

If the litterbox is in an area that might be unpleasant or anxiety-evoking for your kitten (e.g., a dark basement, next to a furnace or air vent, next to a washing machine, or near a toilet or bathtub), it may be necessary to relocate the litterbox. In addition, some kittens will avoid the area if they are chased, cornered, or bothered by another cat or dog in the home. If this is the case, then additional locations or more privacy may be needed (e.g., a cat door to a secluded area).

