

### **KEEPING YOUR INDOOR CAT ACTIVE**

It's true that indoor cats are a safer group than their outdoor counterparts. Inside, there is little chance to be hit by a car (apart from your toddler's toy truck), reduced risk of contracting contagious disease, and fewer animals to fight with. But how do we keep "Sir Purrs-A-Lot" from becoming a big, bored couch potato?



Some of the best things you can do to keep your cat healthy both physically and mentally include playing, training, and feeding a diet that is appropriate for his age, weight, and medical concerns.

#### **Interactive Toys**

Finding the right toys for your kitty can require a bit of trial and error. What excites one cat might bore another. Many cats enjoy a toy that has a ball inside a plastic ring that the cat can bat around. Battery-operated toys encourage your cat to run and chase, but a simple wand with a feather, string, or stuffed toy attached to it can be just as effective. Toys that require human participation also give you an opportunity to deepen the bond with your cat.

A word of caution about laser pointers: Although they cause a cat to run and chase the dot, it can make a cat become neurotic because they can never catch it. One option is to scatter a few treats on the floor & then use to laser to "point" at one of the treats as a reward.

#### **Training**

Clicker training, which marks your cat's behavior with a distinct clicking noise, is also helpful. As your cat learns, he will associate that noise with the desired behavior. The theory is that the click is associated with positive reinforcement and is much faster than with just voice praise.

You can begin clicker training with your cat at any age, but the earlier, the better. Start by showing your cat what the click means. Click and provide your cat a high-value treat, such as a small piece of chicken. Once your cat associates the click with a reward, you can move on to "clicking and treating" when your cat completes a desired behavior.

Like playtime, clicker training also provides a fun activity that you and your cat can enjoy together.

#### **Should You Get A Second Cat?**

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A second kitty may keep your cat company but adult cats who are the sole pet are not generally thought to be in need of feline friends. If you are considering a multi-cat household, adopting two kittens at the same time is often easier than introducing a new pet after your cat has gotten used to being the king of the castle.

To introduce a new cat successfully, we recommend following recommendations from the American Association of Feline Practitioners (AAFP).

### **Other Ideas**

Cats love to climb and observe things from above. If you have the space, a cat tree is a great investment. Make sure it includes features that will allow your cat to nap, observe, or play, such as a tall perch, enclosed cubby, or scratching post.

A “catio” can also provide safe outdoor enrichment for your cat. A secure, screened enclosure can greatly increase mental stimulation and give your cat a taste of the great outdoors without putting him at risk.

Although cats have a reputation for being low maintenance, don’t forget that they still require physical and mental activity. Sir Purrs-A-Lot might be too busy with his battery-operated toy to give you much attention, but know that he appreciates the effort you’ve put in.