

## HAPPY CAT, HAPPY HOME

Your cat's behavioral health is essential to their overall well-being. The better you can satisfy your cat's needs, the better life you can provide for your feline friend. This handout provides you with the foundation on how to create a fulfilling feline home and have a fulfilled feline!

## THE BASICS

**Food-** Cats are obligate carnivores meaning they have a higher protein requirement than most animals. Look for foods that have a meat-based protein as the first ingredient. Canned foods offer a higher protein and moisture content than dry food. Consult with your vet to help you make the best nutritional choices for your cat.

**Water-** Cats are enticed by moving water. They're more inclined to drink water this way. Cat water fountains are a great way to keep your cat hydrated and entertained!

**Litter Box-** The general rule is one litter box per cat plus one extra. Litter boxes should be placed in separate locations to provide your cat options and prevent any litter box guarding in multi-cat households. The best litter boxes for cats are large, open, uncovered with unscented litter. Scoop your boxes daily and completely clean out every other week.

**Healthcare-** Cats should visit their vet for wellness visits annually, not just when they're sick. Senior cats should see the vet for wellness visits twice a year. Consider getting pet insurance to help with the costs of your cat's healthcare.

## A BUSY KITTY IS A HAPPY KITTY

Cats are natural hunters despite being domesticated. They need engaging activities and challenges to keep them from becoming bored and, in some cases, stressed. Commit to playing with your cat daily and offer them various interactive activities/toys to keep them occupied. Keep things interesting by rotating your toys and switching up their locations.

The following are some activities and toys you can offer your cat.

**Prey Play-** Use a [fishing-pole-style toy](#) to simulate a hunting sequence for your cat. Allow your cat to stalk, chase, pound, and catch the toy. End your play session with a treat or small meal to signify the end of the "hunt."

**Food Puzzles-** Place some of your cat's food or treats in a food puzzle to give them an engaging and rewarding challenge. Cats actually like to work for their food! For food puzzle ideas, check out this [website](#).

**Clicker Training-** Cats are trainable. Clicker training can help you build a bond with your cat, reinforce desirable behaviors, and provide mental stimulation and challenge. Check out [Karen Pryor's Clicker Training for Cats](#) to get you started.

**Interactive Toys-** There are more engaging toys besides the standard toy mouse. Tunnels, boxes, and battery-operated chase/pounce toys are some options. These types of toys will encourage physical activity and offer a mental challenge.

## ENRICHMENT

Providing your cat with enrichment is important. Enrichment allows cats to exhibit natural behaviors that are vital to their mental and physical well-being. Some of your cat's natural behaviors are scratching, hunting, jumping, and hiding.

### ENRICH THE ENVIRONMENT

**Scratching Posts-** Cats scratch to release tension, stretch and maintain their claws. Scratching posts provide your cats with this opportunity in an appropriate location. Make sure your scratching posts are sturdy and at least 3 ft. tall.

**Vertical Space-** Cats like to be up high as it helps them feel safe and secure. Cat trees and cat-friendly shelving may help your cat feel on top of the world safely and comfortably.

**Safe Spaces-** Cats like to have safe and comfy spaces for them to hide or relax. Boxes and cat beds in low traffic and quiet areas of your home make great safe spaces.

### ENRICH THE SENSES

**Sound-** Calming music is known to help relax kitties. [Relax My Cat](#) on YouTube is an excellent channel for calming kitty music. If you know your kitty gets stressed when you're not home or if it's the time of year for fireworks putting some calming music on may help your kitty feel better.

**Sight-** Visual stimulation is great for cats. Cats love looking out the window and looking at nature. You could also put up a bird feeder to up the ante. Cats can get frustrated, though, so after those bird watching sessions provide your cat with an interactive toy or play session.

**Smell-** Your cat's sense of smell is 14 times stronger than your own. Catnip, silver vine, and valerian are all herbs that will help stimulate your kitty's senses.

**Touch-** Cats like to rub up against objects and even you! This is how cats "scent mark" when they feel comfy in their space. Self-grooming arches, [brushes](#), and [stations](#) are a great option for comfy cat scent marking.

**Taste-** We would get bored eating the same thing every day, so do some of our cats. Outside of any diet restrictions due to health, give your cats some variety in their food or treats by switching up flavors and textures.

## HOW TO SPEAK CAT?

The best way we can understand our cats is by observing their body language. It's important to recognize when your cat may be getting stressed or anxious. Look up cat body language online to find excellent examples and descriptions of cat body language. If your cat is displaying anxious or fearful body language more often than not, something up! Talk to your vet to make sure your kitty is healthy and then investigate potential behavioral causes.

## HELPFUL HANDOUTS

*Body Language Chart*

*Beginner Training Basics*

## NEED MORE HELP?

Please check out my [website](#) or email me at [thefulfilledfeline@gmail.com](mailto:thefulfilledfeline@gmail.com). I offer various behavioral services to help you and your cat.

