



Indoor Enrichment Activities for Your Cat

Indoor cats have a lifespan that is 4-6 times greater than a cat who goes outdoor (studies show indoor cats can live twenty years or longer, while outdoor cats rarely live past five years.) In addition, they aren't exposed to disease, won't fall victim to predatory animals (or humans), can't get stuck in traps, be hit by cars, get lost, be stolen, or suffer frostbite or heat stroke. Obviously, there are plenty of reasons to keep your cat safe indoors! But sometimes kitty just begs and pleads, and it's hard to say no to that cute face. So how can we keep loved ones safe, healthy, and happy? The secret is what behaviorists call "enrichment"—providing enough physical activity and mental stimulation so your cat is so fulfilled by his life in your home that he doesn't yearn for the great outdoors at all.

For starters, take a look around your home. Try to see it through your cat's eyes—the eyes of someone who likes to be in small places, likes to be up high to survey her kingdom, and also to stay out of the reach of ground-level threats, and who finds sudden, scattered movements tempting beyond all compare. Are there new toys regularly? Are there lots of places to climb and hide? Is there access to windows—better yet, windows that host bird feeders or trees frequented by squirrels?

If not, you can fix this! Shop around for various sizes and shapes of cat trees—with so many available styles, you're sure to find one to match your décor. Set up scratching areas near feeding stations and by litterboxes; the cat is most likely to want to scratch then anyway. Views of outside wildlife provides natural kitty TV. Balls, stuffed animals (large enough to be gripped with the front paws and kicked with the back, a favorite wrestling game of many kitties), and other toys can be kept in a basket or other hiding place and only brought out for a few days, three to five toys at a time. Rotating through the toys will make kitty feel like she's getting something new all the time. Don't forget to join in the fun! Play with teaser toys that she can chase without coming into contact with your fingers, even little laser pointers (not safe for use with dogs) that she can chase like the jungle predator she knows she is.

Fun, games, affection and safety—we can start calling your house the great indoors!