Good Cats Play At Home



Government of South Australia

Dog and Cat Management Board

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Dog and Cat
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House cats are happy cats

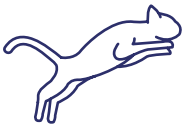
Do you know cats can live happily inside where it's much safer than roaming outdoors?

This book has lots of fun ideas for keeping your house cat happy. It has tips for keeping cats busy inside and going outdoors safely.



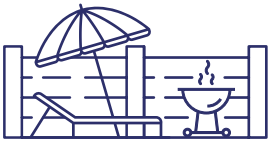
House cat

A house cat spends all their time inside their owners property - this includes indoors and outdoors in safe enclosures.



Roaming cat

A cat who can leave their owners property.



Yard

Any outdoors spaces on your property including gardens, lawns, patios and gazebos.

GOODCAT

Good cats have responsible owners

Why house cats?

House cats are happy cats

You, your cat and your community are all better off when your cat stays home.

Your cat is safe

It's dangerous out there! When your cat explores the streets, suburbs and beyond, they can get into all sorts of trouble. Do you even know where they go? They could be hit by cars, attacked by dogs, bitten by rival cats, catch diseases from other animals or swept away in stormwater drains.

Indoor house cats can live up to 12 years longer than outdoor roamers who only average 3 years.

You save money

House cats are less likely to get injured or sick from outside threats like road accidents. This can reduce your cat's veterinary and health care expenses.

Happy neighbours

Keeping kitty home will make your neighbours happy. Cats allowed out at night can upset neighbours and their pets when they venture into their yards and houses.

Protect wildlife

You're keeping other animals safe when you keep your cat within your own house and yard. Cats are instinctive hunters, so they'll chase smaller animals whenever they get the chance. When you keep kitty home, you're safeguarding lots of native frogs, lizards, birds and all the smaller critters your cat will chase.

More time together

When your cat's home with you, they're always close for cuddles and company. You'll be best buddies who spend lots of quality time together. More hugs? Yes, please!

You know where they are

If you keep your cat home, you know it's safe. You won't have to worry about where it is, or if it will make it home.





Setting up inside

There are plenty of ways to make your house cat's life comfortable, content and full of fun.

Food, water and litter trays

Keep your cat's food and water in quiet, accessible places and top up water daily.

Litter trays should be in a separate private spot, well away from their food. Keep the tray clean by scooping solids out daily and wash it weekly with water and non-scented soap.

Toys

Toys are a great way to keep your cat entertained. You can buy all sorts of exciting cat toys, but household items such as paper bags, boxes, ping pong balls, and scrunched-up paper are often just as appealing. Try alternating and hiding the toys for extra fun.

Safety tips

- Check your cat's toys regularly for loose parts.
- Always cut the handles off bags so your cat doesn't get caught in them.
- Supervise your cat when they've got ribbons, ropes or other toys they may swallow.

High resting places

Give your cat lots of high resting areas. High places make your cat feel secure and let them survey their home. A safe window ledge, tall scratching post, specially-constructed non-slip shelf or freestanding cupboard helps your cat feel safe.

If your cat has views of the street, backyard or treetops, they'll be content for hours.



Enclosed spaces

Give your cat a few enclosed, private spaces inside. They'll love the chance to curl up in a quiet area away from other people and pets. A cardboard box lined with a soft blanket, a cat scratching tower with an enclosed platform, or an igloo bed are great options.

Scratching post

Cats need to scratch to maintain their claws, stretch their muscles and mark their territory. So, they'll need a good scratching post.

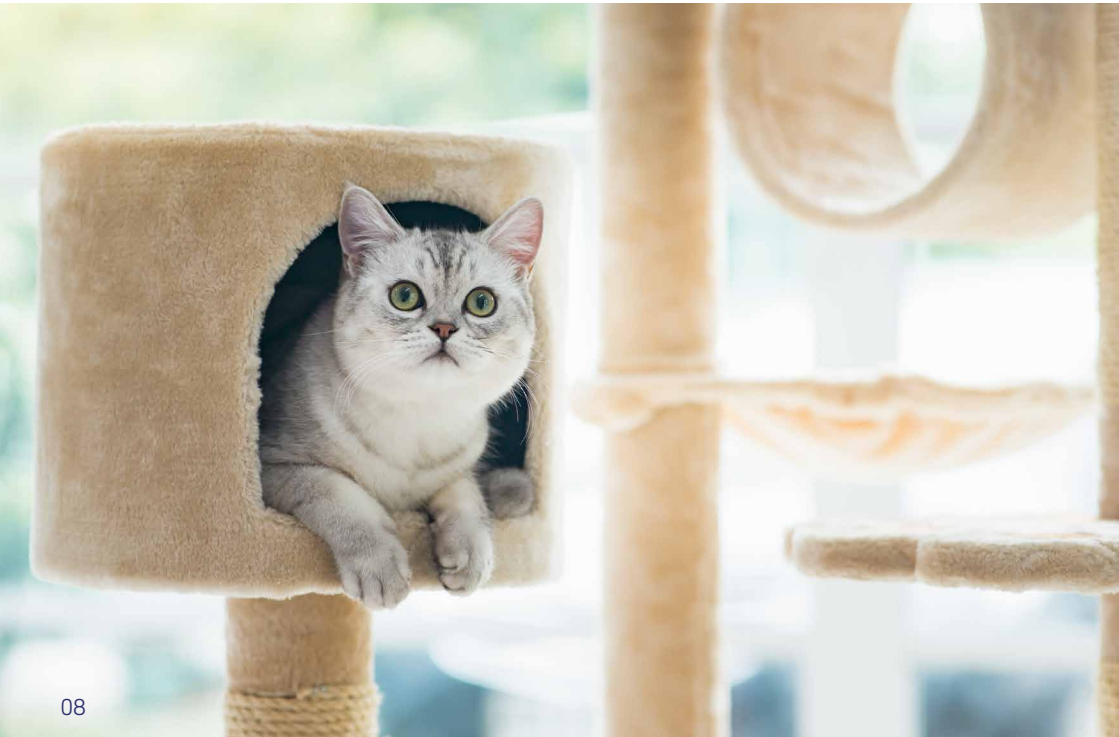
When picking a scratching post, make sure it's tall enough for your cat to fully stretch out when scratching. It needs to be solid enough to not tip over, and have a texture your cat likes.

Feeding your cat on the scratcher and putting it near your cat's sleeping spot should encourage them to use it. You can even reward your kitty every time they use it.

Bedding

Your cat will spend most of their time resting in quiet areas where they feel comfortable.

They'll prefer soft, warm bedding, so give them lots of beds in sunny spots if you can. Place some beds in both high and low places, so your cat has a variety of choices.



Setting up outside

You can give your cat the best of both worlds — indoors and out — by cat-proofing your yard. Cat-proofing makes sure they can go outdoors safely without escaping your property.

To help you choose the best option for cat-proofing your outdoor space or yard, ask yourself the following questions.

- **How energetic is your cat?**
  A young cat with lots of energy might need more play space than a senior or sedate cat.

- **How many cats do you have, and do they get along?**
  An enclosure should provide adequate space for the number of cats you have. They will need room to play and move around comfortably.

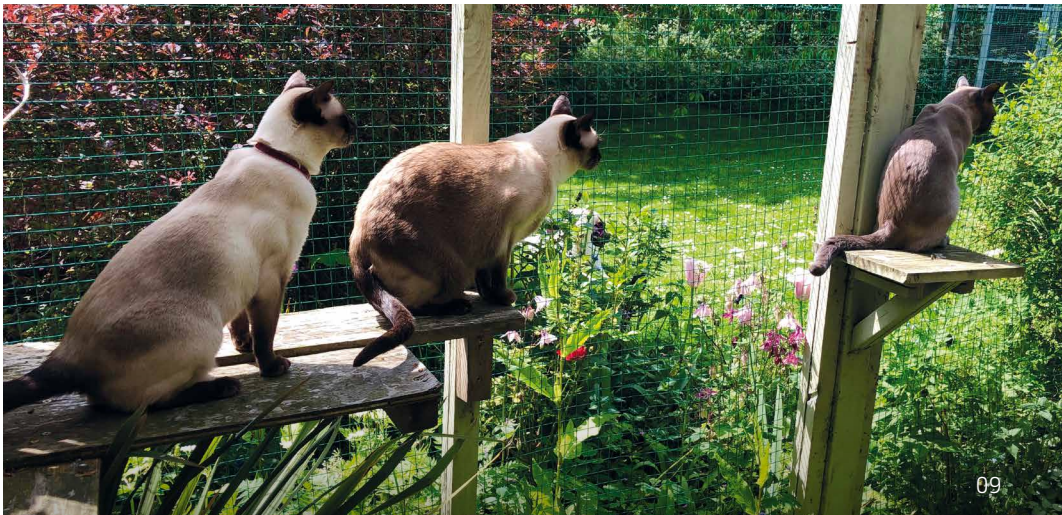
- **How much space do you have?**
  The space you have available will help you decide which outdoor addition best suits your home and cat.

- **How could your cat escape your yard?**
  Look for low-hanging branches or trees your cat could climb, low fences, gates, objects stacked near walls, or other access points.

- **Is there anything dangerous in your yard?**
  Look for toxic plants, hazardous items, fences with sharp edges, and poisons.

- **Are there any gaps in your fences?**
  Look for gaps where your boundaries meet, holes underneath fences, or weak points your cat might escape through.

- **How will you cover trees and shrubs?**
  If your cat can climb trees and shrubs to escape your yard, you could block access at the base of them so your cat can't get a foothold.



Setting up outside continued

Popular wasy to keep cats in yards are cat-proofing fences with net or roller additions, attaching cat enclosures to homes, or adding freestanding cat enclosures to a garden.

Cat-proof your fence

Cat-proofing your fence means modifying the top so your cat can't jump over to escape your yard. This is an excellent option as your cat can move freely around your house and yard whenever they want. It will also stop other cats from entering your home.

You can have custom modifications done to cat-proof your existing fence, or you can do it yourself. You should first check that your fence doesn't have any gaps, is completely sealed, and that all gates close and lock. Make the effort to review your entire fence line closely.

Fence-top rollers

Purpose-made rollers installed on the top of fences spin when your cat's feet touch them. This immediately throws your cat off balance and back into your yard. Your cat can't get the grip it needs to stabilise itself and jump over.

You can buy fence rollers from large hardware stores or online suppliers who can also arrange installation if you don't think you could do it yourself. Ask or search for 'cat fence rollers' or 'spinning paddles'.





Fence toppers are easy to install and an economical way to modify your fence to keep your cat in.

Photos courtesy of **oscillot.com.au**

Setting up outside continued

Fence-top nets

Adding netting to the top of your existing fence will block your cat from scaling it. Netting fence toppers angle inwards and are made of soft, unstable material that deters your cat from climbing over. Make sure to use cat-safe netting so your cat can't get their head or limbs stuck.

If you're handy, you can install these yourself, or you can hire someone to do this through the supplier.

Cat enclosures

Cat enclosures can be attached to your home or free standing. The size of your enclosure will depend on how many cats you have and whether they're friends.

An enclosure (or 'catio') attached to your home gives your cat a safe space outside and access to their favourite spots indoors. A simple solution is to enclose an existing area with cat-friendly netting or mesh. This could be a section between your house and fence, a veranda, patio or courtyard.

Alternatively, there are modular maze, tunnel and enclosure systems which you can add to at any time. You can keep these simple or build your cat a kingdom – it's up to you. You can find these at hardware and pet supply stores or on the internet.





Setting up outside continued

Freestanding cat enclosures give your cat a safe space to relax outside when you can't attach anything to your home. You can purchase these as ready-made units, or design and construct your own. You can find plenty of designs on the internet if you are keen to build one.

Make sure your cat's new outdoor space has a warm bed and shelter from the wind, rain and sun. They'll also need food and water. You'll need to take your cat to and from a freestanding enclosure as they won't be able to access it themselves.



Bringing an outdoor cat in

Ideally you would keep your cat in from the first day they join the family. But plenty of outdoor cats have been bought inside and like it so much they don't care much for going out.

Start by setting up your home with everything your cat needs. Then, teach your cat to love inside-time with lots of rewards and entertaining activities. Try to make indoors as fun and interesting as is it outside.

Every cat is different, so you'll need to help your cat adjust in their own way. Some of the following tips should help your cat make the transition.

- **Set up your home**
  Introduce kitty litter and scratching posts into your home if you don't already have them. Plus, make sure you've got lots of hiding spots, high places and toys for your cat to enjoy.
- **Kitty litter**
  Place in an easy to access, quiet, private place. If the cat is used to going outside, you could try filling the litter tray with outside dirt, until the cat uses the box, then transition to litter.
- **Feed your cat inside**
  Give your kitty breakfast and dinner inside and keep them indoors for increasing lengths of time.
- **Keep your cat inside overnight**
  Start keeping your cat inside overnight between dinner and breakfast.
- **Give them something better to do**
  Provide lots of fun activities, attention and positive reinforcement while they're inside to keep them entertained.
- **Have safe outdoor time**
  Set up an outdoor enclosure or secure your backyard, so your cat can enjoy outdoor-time safely. If you can't have an enclosure, you could try teaching your cat to go outside on a harness.



Extra touches

Companionship

Build a close bond with your cat by spending quality time with them every day. Playing, grooming and training are all excellent ways to hang out together.

Playing games with your cat fulfils their hunting instincts. Grooming keeps their skin and coat healthy.

Training is another fun activity you can do together that keeps your cat's brain busy. You can train your cat to do tricks or walk on a harness. Look online for training ideas and tips that follow the 'positive reinforcement' philosophy.

Food foraging

A cat will spend up to six hours a day hunting, stalking and consuming prey in the wild. Try some of these simple things below to replicate this experience for your cat.

- Hide dry cat biscuits and food around your home. Take care if you've got multiple cats who may fight over food.
- Use food and treats to train your cat to do new tricks.
- Throw food to your cat to chase and catch.
- Provide interactive toys, like treat balls that your cat needs to manipulate to gain food.

Plants

Most cats enjoy nibbling, sniffing and rubbing on a variety of plants. So having cat-safe plants throughout your home will be great fun for kitty.

Cats enjoy grass seedlings, catmint, and catnip which you can grow in pots around the house for your cat. You'll want to check that any plants you bring into your home aren't harmful to your cat. Members of the Lily family are particularly toxic to cats. Contact your vet or look online for more information.

Extra sights and sounds

Give your cat some entertaining things to see and hear around the home. Try placing a bird feeder in a cat-proofed spot outside a window, or plant some insect-attracting flowers they can see. Get some fish in an aquarium, play some nature footage on TV, or play soothing music on the radio.

Company and space

Some cats enjoy the company of other pets. However, you'll need to find the perfect match and handle introductions carefully for another cat to fit into your home. Ask a reputable shelter, registered breeder, or your vet for more advice before deciding to introduce a new pet.

So your cats don't feel overcrowded, make sure you've got enough room for each cat to have their separate areas. They'll also need their own space, food, water, bedding and litter trays.



Keep learning

There's so much to learn about your cat. Keeping your kitty inside your home means you'll learn more about their personality, their adorable quirks and how they like to spend their days.

You can research online, read books, and ask your local council or vet about more ways to keep your house cat safe, happy and content.

For information on South Australia's cat ownership laws, visit **www.dogandcatboard.com.au**

Let's all be responsible cat owners.

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