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14 Ways To Get Your Cat To Drink More Water

Importance Of Playtime

Secrets To Socializing Your Cat

Myth Buster: Cats Like To Be Left Alone

Next Issue: Cat Arthritis: How To Help Your Arthritic Cat
(Or Prevent Them From Getting It)



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CONTENT



02

Importance Of Playtime

It's believed that for every hour of play, a cat's life is extended by about four hours. The fact is that your senior cat needs to play just as much as your kitten, although he or she may have a drastically different style of playing.



07

Secrets To Socializing Your Cat

Socializing a cat refers to getting your feline friend used to spending time around humans (other than yourself). For many cats, this can mean the difference between spending their lives hiding from your guests or feeling confident enough to stay put when visitors stop by.



12

Myth Buster: Cats Like To Be Left Alone

Have you ever heard that your cat doesn't really care about you and prefers to be left alone? If so, you've most likely spoken to someone who knows absolutely nothing about cats! The truth is that your feline friend can form quite an attachment to you and will even track your movements throughout your home with his or her hearing abilities.



17

14 Ways To Get Your Cat To Drink More Water

Due to their low thirst drive, a cat doesn't usually feel the need to seek out water until she's already getting dehydrated. Unfortunately, dehydration can happen quickly, and it's a serious threat to your kitty's health.

Next Issue: Cat Arthritis: How To Help Your Arthritic Cat (Or Prevent Them From Getting It)



Importance Of Playtime

When some humans think about cats playing, they typically tend to think about childhood. So, much like with human children, they fall under the misconception that adult cats no longer need to play. The reality, however, is that nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, it's believed that for every hour of play, a cat's life is extended by about four hours.

The fact is that your senior cat needs to play just as much as your kitten, although he or she may have a drastically different style of playing. Whereas a kitten can run around your house like its tail was on fire, your senior cat may prefer to remain relatively chill. But if you try to tempt him or her with a toy wand, you'll see some lazy paw thrusts toward the toy. And, yes, this definitely counts as playing!

How Important Is Playtime?

To get the answer to this question, we'll refer you to Dr. Carol Osborne, DMV of Chagrin Falls Veterinary Center & Pet Clinic. "Constructive playtime for a cat is much-needed exercise... It often improves cats' mental health, too, lessening anxiety and destructive behavior." Furthermore, Dr. Osborne says, "It helps them engage, deal with boredom, and it helps build bonds... Play stimulates their brains and also helps them exercise."

2 So, as you can see, playing with your cat isn't just something you can do when you get bored. Instead,

it needs to be a regular part of your feline friend's daily existence. That's because playing is part of a cat's biology. In fact, whenever they stalk a toy mouse or go running after an interactive toy, it's because their natural prey stalking instincts have been stimulated. And if you've got an indoor kitty, this is beyond important for their physical and mental well being.

How Long Should A Play Session Last?

Keeping your cat properly exercised and mentally stimulated – without pushing things too far – is a fine line, but once you find the right balance, it's relatively easy. Most pet experts suggest playing with your cat in 10-minute bursts, and doing these at least four times per day.

Your cat will let you know when he or she is done playing, too. They'll either give up on chasing their toy or will display signs that they've overexerted themselves. As their "parent," it's up to you to ensure they don't become overexerted on a regular basis.

You can begin to learn your cat's many signals, and you may even be able to predict when they'll get bored. Sometimes, your kitty may demand extra playtime. At other times, you can simply chase your

cat around the house for a few minutes. Most cats absolutely love running after their human, and they might just reach out a paw to “tag” you, too!

Ritualized Play Sessions

If there's one thing that cats prize above all others, it's rituals. They prefer to eat at the same times, take naps at the same times, etc. This also extends to play sessions, so do your best to honor what your cat prefers.

We understand that things happen sometimes, but even if you can't play with your cat every single day at 7 p.m., be sure to give your cat an alternative. For instance, if your normal playtime gets too busy, provide your cat with a space where they can sit and watch the birds. This will also stimulate their minds and, possibly, get them to run through your house, too.



Six Reasons Your Cat Loves Playing

Have you ever noticed how your cat's eyes can light up during playtime? This is due to how much playing can disrupt their normal existence. They absolutely crave it, even if they don't seem too keen on playing with a specific toy.

Here's the thing; if your cat isn't a fan of a certain toy, he probably won't play with it, regardless of how tempting you make it. Therefore, be sure to switch their toys, so that you can learn which ones spark the most joy. Once this happens, they'll definitely be up for playtime!

Let's learn about the six primary ways that playing benefits your kitty cat.

Boosts Physical Health

Have you ever gone about your daily routine without incorporating any exercise? If so, you've undoubtedly noticed how your energy began to sag and you put on weight. Well, the exact same thing can happen to your cat. And, just as it's dangerous for humans to live a sedentary lifestyle, it's also dangerous for your kitty.

This is especially true if you keep your cat indoors 24/7. Although this is the single best way to keep your cat safe, you're going to have to sacrifice some of your free time to make it a healthy option. You see, cats who go outside have less of a need to play with their humans (they do still need some interaction, though). They also come across many, many dangers while outside, which means your best bet is to keep them inside and play with them, instead.

All it takes is 15–60 minutes of exercise (varies per breed, age, etc.) each day to keep your cat fit and trim. This can also prevent them from overeating out of boredom.

It'll Strengthen Your Bond

Anytime you feel the need to strengthen your bond with your feline friend, it is always ideal to do so through play. Gather some toys that your cat likes and choose one per play session.

If, for example, your cat likes to chase jingly balls, throw one back and forth across your hallway. This will soon get your cat moving with great speed, and she'll have so much fun doing so! The best part is that she'll make the connection between you and the fun she's having, which will definitely make your bond stronger.

Do you have a cat that's not all that interested in lap sitting or cuddling right next to you? Instead, honor her personality by using playtime to become closer. It's the perfect way to do so, and she'll gain important benefits.



Socialize Your Cat With Playtime

Does your kitty exhibit negative behaviors in your house? One way to reduce them is through playing. You see, most of the time when a cat does something to bother you, that's not their actual intent. Rather, they're trying to communicate with you, and the message they're trying to send is "I'm bored."

If your cat seems to love knocking your items off of a shelf, scratching your couch, or climbing your curtains, it's a pretty sure bet that he's simply bored. Cats are creative, and if they don't get the playtime they need with you, they'll come up with another way to get it. And you can be almost 100% positive that you won't like the way they decide to do it.

Instead of accepting their negative behaviors (and instead of trying to punish them), play with them! This will distract them from doing destructive things, and it'll reroute their energy in a positive direction. When you play with him, you have the ability to dictate which behaviors are good, and this can help him learn what he should and shouldn't do.

Playing With A Cat Is FUN!

We've given you some of the more tangible benefits of playing with your cat, but the most important reason to do so is because it's fun! However, until you truly begin to focus on your cat, you won't notice all the fun you could be having. Therefore, we recommend putting your phone down and truly interacting with her.

Did you know that it's actually beneficial for YOUR mental health to do this? Seeing your beloved cat acting silly will bring a smile to your face, and it can

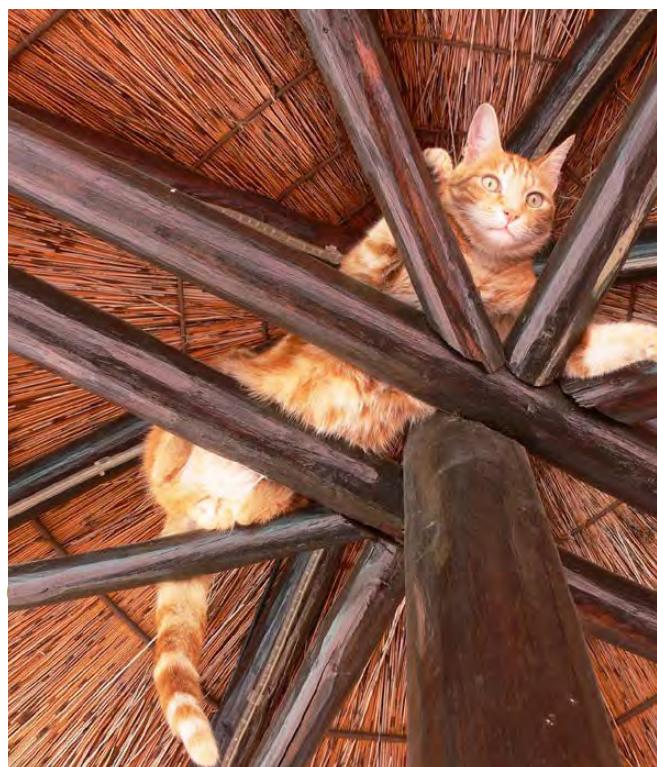
be amazing to see just how athletic they are. Your cat is likely to do all sorts of wonderful things while playing, including backflips. Engage with them, and you'll both get something out of it.

Playtime Is CRITICAL For Indoor Cats

As previously mentioned, if you've made the wise decision to keep your cat indoors, you'll also have to provide them with lots of playtime. Cats who go outside can find their own ways to play, but a cat that's inside 24/7 will become mostly reliant on you to help him play.

The good news is that there are TONS of different toys available, so even if it takes a while to find the right one, have faith that it is out there. Your absolute best bet is to purchase a wide array of different toys. That way, regardless of what mood your feline friend is in, you should have something to offer him that'll make him sit up and take notice.

Suggestions include catnip toys, flapping fish, wands, puzzle toys, laser pointers, etc. Plus, be sure to get some automated toys, as well. This allows your cat to engage in self-play when you're not around. Basically, the idea is to provide enough variety that your cat will be able to ward off boredom, anxiety, and stress.



The truth is that letting a cat into your home means having an incredibly sensitive creature. Even the smallest change to your home can cause them considerable anxiety and stress. A big change is obvious, but even if you simply move their litter box by a few feet, it can leave them feeling out of sorts and a bit unmoored.

To help combat these feelings, you can use playtime to comfort your kitty. If you schedule a regular time to play, this will give your cat extra comfort. And, if your cat decides to act more aloof than usual, try using a toy to bring them back into your family's main room.

REMEMBER: It's important to play with your cat on a regular basis, but if you've fallen out of the habit, you can **ALWAYS** pick it back up. Your relationship with your cat will naturally change over time, but never feel as if playing is something your cat no longer wants to do.

Even if you've got a super old cat, try putting the red laser's dot near their feet and move it around slowly. Most of the time, you can get them to grab at it because cats **NEED** time to play, no matter what their age is.

What If I Don't Have The Money For Cat Toys?

Many people live paycheck-to-paycheck, which might make it difficult to purchase a lot of cat toys. Fortunately, your cat doesn't know the difference between an expensive toy and a toilet paper roll.

My cat, Riley, absolutely **LOVES** it when I take a few pages from my Bob's Burgers Day-to-Day calendar, ball them up, and toss them in his direction. He's also a big fan of tissue paper, so anytime I receive a gift, he does, too!

Other items you can use include a paper bag (cut off the handles, if there are any), a milk carton's top ring, hair ties, a Q-tip, bubbles, or – in Riley's case – earplugs. Now, many of these items may make you a bit nervous, so it's best to allow your cat to play with them when you can supervise what she's doing.

The point of this particular section is to show you that – when it comes to your cat – money isn't important. What's important is that you interact

with them and find items that she'll want to play with. Of course, if you have the extra money, purchasing cat toys can help relieve you from having to supervise everything they do.

Rotation Is Key

If there's one thing you can be certain of, it's that cats will get bored with their toys. Something that sparked joy yesterday could become a complete dud today, so you need to be prepared to rotate his toys regularly.

But here's the thing – you **DON'T** need to rush out and buy a new toy every single time this happens. Instead, simply swap one item for another, and be sure to put away the item that you aren't playing with. Doing this will make the toy he decided he didn't like become fresh and new again when you pull it back out a few weeks or months later. In other words, you don't need to have a huge toy budget to make him happy.



Why Should I Put So Much Energy Into My Cat?

Honestly, if you really needed to ask that question, you might not be the best candidate for a cat. You see, many people are relying on outdated assumptions about what type of pet is best for them, and some of these individuals truly believe that a cat doesn't need any interaction.

For those of you who are simply busy but do understand your cat has needs, it might interest you to know that 55% of American house cats are considered to be overweight or obese. They run a higher risk of developing health issues, not the least of which is being mentally unstimulated.

Playing with your cat will:

- Ensure they get exercise
- Keep them from getting bored
- Relieve their stress
- Help avoid behavioral issues
- Provide bonding time

Some of you might be wondering what your cat has to be stressed out about. Again, this relies upon a misunderstanding of a cat's life. Cats have complex emotions, just like people.

One of a cat's primary stressors is actually its owner. That's because your cat can actually end up taking on some of your problems. Let's say that you suffer from mood swings that make your emotions kind of unpredictable. This will stress your kitty out to no end. Remember, cats crave routines and consistency. If they're constantly worried about how you're going to react to any given situation, it's going to put them on edge.

A common behavioral issue that can develop from this is urinating inappropriately such as on your clothes. What your cat is really saying when she does this is, "I don't feel secure." And, if you look at yourself closely, you'll see why. Cats mirror human behavior so much, in fact, that they can actually make themselves sick. This helps highlight just how strongly your cat identifies with you and whatever it is you're going through.

Other stressors may include a change in their environment (even moving a piece of furniture can be highly stressful), other pets, a change to your routine, houseguests, etc. Do your best to minimize these stressors and always make playing with your cat a priority.

Final Thoughts

The one thing that every cat wishes its human knew is that they don't misbehave to try to upset you. Whenever you find a disobedient cat, we can practically guarantee you that their owner has done something wrong or hasn't noticed something important. The first step toward breaking bad habits is to ensure your feline friend has daily playtime – both with you and on his own. This is one of the





Secrets To Socializing Your Cat

What does it mean to socialize a cat? No, this isn't a term that includes meeting other kitties or dogs. Unlike with a dog, socializing a cat refers only to getting your feline friend used to spending time around humans (other than yourself).

For many cats, this can mean the difference between spending their lives hiding from your guests or feeling confident enough to stay put when visitors stop by. You'll also have to socialize your cat to a point when you first adopt him or her. After all, they will undoubtedly come to love you, but before that can happen, they have to get to know you first.

Six Key Socialization Tips

Let's begin by looking at how you should introduce them to the people who live in your home. With the following six key socialization tips, your cat will soon come to accept her new family.

1. Allow Your Cat To Map Out The Situation

It's time to begin socialization, which means that you must take yourself out of the equation. Instead, endeavor to see everything from your kitty's point of view. Rather than seeing a loving

family that wants to include him in everything, your cat will see a bunch of giants who try to scoop him up, hug him, and follow him around. Oh, and did we mention that the giants are also strangers?

Instead of scaring your feline friend, let everyone in your household know that your cat needs room to check everything out. This means that no matter how badly you want to interact with your cat, you must give him some space to explore on his own. Before he will come to you for a friendly petting, he must identify potential safe places in your house. This means he'll need to investigate and sniff everything.

When a cat goes through your home in this way, he's basically creating his own internal map. During this mapping phase, he'll be able to figure out which room belongs to which person, and he'll also find secret little spots where he can retreat to when everything becomes too much.

2. Gently Begin To Touch Her

Once your kitty is done making her map of your home, she'll eventually come into the living room. She wants to become part of your family, but she'll still be hesitant about it. Therefore, instruct everyone to sit quietly and do their own thing,

If she comes up to you, put your hand near her head and allow her to smell it. As long as this goes well and she doesn't run away, you can gently try petting her on her back. Additionally, you may try rubbing her cheeks very gently with one or two fingers. Not only will this begin to build trust, but it's also a great way to ensure that her smell is on you, which marks you as 'belonging' to her.

While you're in this phase, be sure to keep a close eye on her tail. It can tell you much more than you might initially think. For instance:

- **High tail** – Confidence and contentment are indicated by a tail that's held high in the air. In fact, if it's sticking straight up, it means your cat is indicating her willingness to be friendly. Watch the tip of her tail, too. If it twitches, it can mean she's having a particularly happy moment.
- **Question mark tail** – When you see your cat's tail curve like a question mark, it might be a good time to take a break from your regular routine. That's because she's indicating that she wants to play!
- **Tucked away tail** – If she tucks her tail beneath her body, she's feeling nervous or fearful.
- **Puffed up tail** – Your cat is feeling frightened, stressed, and/or severely agitated.
- **Whipping tail** – When your cat's tail begins slapping rapidly in a back and forth motion, it's a warning to stay away.
- **Swishing tail** – If she's slowly moving her tail from side to side, she's most likely focusing on a specific object.
- **Wrapped tail** – When your cat sits with her tail wrapped around another cat, a dog, a human, etc., it indicates friendship.



3. Move On To Letting Your Cat Rub Against You

Whenever your cat comes out of hiding, it may take them a few minutes to get used to their new people again. Your best bet is to instruct your entire family to allow your feline friend to approach and sniff them at his leisure.

Extending just an index finger is a good way to start this process. Once your cat gets a good sniff, he'll recognize them again. Keep in mind that this may take a few minutes. After a beat, they'll recognize you, and you should be rewarded. He'll most likely either purr, rub against you, or give a happy little 'chirp.' If he's really excited to see you, he may even do two or three of these actions at once!

4. Provide Her With A Safe Place

Some of these steps will become old news once your cat becomes adjusted to your home. However, it will **ALWAYS** be necessary to provide her with a safe place she can retreat to if she becomes afraid or bored.

With a new kitty, you might want to place her carrier or crate in the room. Make sure it is open and has a soft towel in place.

As she becomes more used to her environment, try giving her a cardboard box with a door cut into it. Alternatively, you can give her a cat tree. Regardless of what type of space you provide, be sure to provide something, and make sure she knows that it's her space.



5. Reward Social Behavior

There is one proven method for gaining more and more positive interaction with your cat – praise her effusively! Yes, that's right. Whenever your kitty is social with you – whether this means butting against your hand or trying to get you to join her in a game – you **MUST** give her gentle strokes, treats, praise, etc. Now, you won't have to do this forever, but it's absolutely critical when you're attempting to socialize your cat.

Perhaps even more importantly, whenever your cat does something undesirable – whether hiding from you or not being very friendly – you **MUST** ignore it. This will help get the point across that you're looking for positive interactions only.

REMEMBER: Be receptive to your cat's attempts at giving you affection. The more receptive you are, the less shy she'll be in the long run.

6. Gain Their Trust With A Routine

Now that you've built a relationship with your cat that's based on positive interactions, it's time to incorporate people from outside your home into his life. Building a routine is the best way to do this!

For example, whenever you entertain guests in your home, you could also make it a point to give him food and pet him. This is especially critical with guests who will be visiting on a regular basis. What this does is create a bridge in his mind between a specific guest and receiving food. Most cats are extremely food oriented, which will make your guest seem more approachable.

It's also vital to feed him at regular times throughout the day, whether you have a guest over or not.

Feeding him this way will build his confidence and make him feel less vulnerable. And, because he's food motivated, it can build a much healthier relationship.

Another way to build trust through a routine is to spend as much time as possible in the same room with your cat, but **DO NOT** directly interact with him. In other words, don't pressure him to join you or to play with you. Simply sit in the same room while watching TV or reading a book. Do this enough times, and he'll start coming to you on his own. Again, this is very important because it demonstrates that he's gained confidence.

Let Your Cat's Personality Determine Your Actions

When it comes to socializing your kitty, it's basically impossible to take it too slowly, but it **IS** possible to move too quickly. Therefore, take it slow and allow your cat's particular personality to lead the way.

If he warms up quickly, that's fantastic! If, however, he takes more time, that's also fantastic. Whether he warms up in a few hours, days, weeks, or even months, the entire point is to give him the space he needs to make the decision on his own.

Case in point, my black cat Riley can be extremely affectionate, but he still has his moments. He's lived with me for four years and is generally confident, but he also needs to be given a **LOT** of time to himself on a daily basis. If I were to keep bugging him, he'd quickly get angry. But if I leave him to seek me out, he will eventually miss me and come see what I'm up to. By allowing him to move at his own pace, I've turned a former stray cat into a total love bug.



Keep In Mind That Socialization And Domestication Are NOT The Same

Always remember that there is a very significant difference between being domesticated and being socialized. Domestication is something that took several generations. Socialization, meanwhile, is always specific to the individual cat.

Socialization Is A Continuum

A cat isn't born with innate knowledge about being feline. He must be shown how to do certain things, including using a litter box. This is one of the main perks of ensuring that kittens stay with their mother for at least 12–14 weeks.

Sadly, people commonly believe that kittens can be separated from their mother after just 8 weeks, so this is typically what happens. However, allowing them to stay with mom for at least 12 weeks will give you a much more confident kitty because his or her mother will have enough time to teach them everything about being a cat.

Once they've reached 12–14 weeks old, they'll be ready to move on to their forever homes. Much as their mother taught them all about being a cat, you'll now be in a position to teach them all about humans. This is the critical aspect of socialization, after all.

REMEMBER: No two cats are exactly alike. Every experience your cat has will help to determine how naturally social he is. Let's take two examples:

Cat A has had a normal life. She was raised by her mother until she hit 14 weeks, then she was transferred to a loving human family. Her people took their time socializing with her, and now she feels extremely confident in her skills.

Cat B, meanwhile, lost her mother at 6 weeks. This was before she was even fully weaned! Even if everything else is the same, Cat B will have some issues with inappropriate behavior, may struggle to properly socialize with humans and other pets, and may even have health complications. She's also likely

to knead at her "mom's belly" (usually a blanket) and may even suck on a blanket at the same time.

Riley was, unfortunately, like Cat B. Therefore, it's taken a really long time and effusive praise to get him to be as confident as he is. And he STILL kneads his "mom" every single night and, yes, he sucks on the blanket while he's kneading it. This is despite the fact that he's almost five years old now. This behavior has become ingrained, and it's unlikely to stop. On the good side, his other less positive behaviors have stopped.

Now, getting back to the continuum, cats don't simply become increasingly social. Instead, how social they are can vary from day to day. Let's say you have a very good week of interacting with your kitty, and he's feeling super confident. But then, you go on vacation for a week. When you return home, it's unrealistic to expect him to be at the same point where he was a week before. You can get him back to that point, though.



Cats And Their Touch Barrier

For cats, there are four primary states of being:

- **Fully Unsocialized** – Won't approach, and avoids being touched.
- **Unsocialized** – Might approach, but avoids being touched.
- **Less Socialized** – Will approach, and sometimes allows himself to be touched.
- **Well Socialized** – Will approach, and allows himself to be touched.

In the examples listed above, your cat can move from being well socialized to being less socialized, depending on your actions and the relationship the two of you build. Therefore, always strive to provide consistent interaction to your feline friend.

Signs Of A Socialized Cat

If your cat is socialized, it will behave in this way if a human comes near:

- Approaches
- Allows touch
- Vocalizes (meow, chirp)
- Raises her tail
- Raises her ears regularly
- Reaches toward a person
- Retains a relaxed posture
- Kneads
- Rubs
- Purrs
- Plays
- Sniffs
- Shakes or grooms her body
- Exposes her stomach
- Shows an interest in household sounds
- Remains visible during the daytime

Signs Of An Unsocialized Cat

If a cat is unsocialized, it will behave in the following ways:

- Doesn't allow touch
- Won't vocalize (meow, chirp)
- Ears are kept flat or back
- Hides/flees from an approaching person
- Keeps an arched or tense posture
- Tightly wraps her tail around herself
- Lashes out or swipes at people
- Hisses
- Pupils dilate
- Howls
- Growls
- Crawls or crouches
- Bristles fur
- Can't relax around people
- Has no interest in household sounds
- Hides during the daytime

Again, this is all a continuum. Riley exhibits most of the signs of a socialized cat now, but he still hisses and growls whenever anyone but me comes to the

door. He also runs away from visitors, although he's recently gained enough confidence to come back into the living room to check out the visitors after an hour or so.



Factors Of Socialization

The following factors will help determine how socialized your cat will become.

- **Age** – Should begin socializing before they hit two months.
- **Time with people** – Again, early socialization is best.
- **Positive, Neutral, or Negative Interaction**
 - Every negative interaction will hurt a cat's socialization.
- **Environment and Stress Level** – Try to provide the best possible environment and work on reducing their stress level.
- **Genetics and Breed** – Some factors are innate such as their breed and genetic makeup.
- **Personality** – Finally, the type of personality they have can make them more or less socialized.

As you can see, some factors can be influenced by you, but others cannot. Each cat is unique, and you need to meet them wherever they happen to be.

Final Thoughts

Properly socializing your cat will make everyone in your house much happier. However, don't forget that your cat's personality, breed, and genetics will also play a part in just how social they're willing to become. Even if you have a more hesitant cat, it's possible to ensure that they'll show love and affection toward the people who are in their lives on a daily basis. And that's ultimately what matters most!



Myth Buster: Cats Like To Be Left Alone

Have you ever heard that your cat doesn't really care about you and prefers to be left alone? If so, you've most likely spoken to someone who knows absolutely nothing about cats!

The truth is that your feline friend can form quite an attachment to you and will even track your movements throughout your home with his or her hearing abilities. Also, if you've ever tried to go to the bathroom alone, you know how wrong the naysayers are. In fact, your kitty follows you when you go to the bathroom because he wants to show you affection. And in the cat world, guarding someone and/or following someone around is the best way to show that they care about you.

Cats Enjoy Some Alone Time

Now, before we go any further, it would be remiss of us not to mention that, yes, cats do enjoy **SOME** time alone. In this way, they're similar to humans. When it's time to sleep, for instance, your cat might walk into a room without any humans in it. This behavior is completely normal and should actually be encouraged. After all, it's vital for everyone to develop some independence.

Something your cat probably does much more often, though, is seek out high ground in the same room as you. If you pay attention to the signals she's putting off, you should be able to tell whether you're invited to pet her or being warned to stay

away. These signals are confusing for some humans, but they're really quite similar to the same signals you put off.

Every cat's personality is different, which means they'll invite varying levels of attention at various times. I used to have a sweet tuxedo cat named Mephi, and she almost always wanted affection and interaction. With my huge black cat Riley, though, if he's resting on the top of his cat tree or has wandered back into my bedroom during the day, he doesn't want to interact.

Guess what will happen if I try to pet him anyway? That's right, he usually lashes out and bites me to put me in my place. As such, I don't tend to bother him unless he moves down to the middle of his cat tree. However, when he does move down, he usually spends a significant portion of his time trying to look back at me. This is his way of inviting me to come pet him.

Another thing Riley will do when he starts to feel lonely is come find me and meow until I agree to put whatever I'm working on aside for a few minutes. I'll follow him into the living room, where he wants me to brush him, watch him eat, and play with him for a little bit. If I try to go back into my office too quickly, he'll come meow at me again until I've spent what he feels is enough time with him.

As you can see, this isn't the type of behavior that a total loner would exhibit. And that's because cats LOVE interaction. They simply prefer it to be on their terms.

Is My Cat Lonely?

If you share your home with a domesticated cat, remember that she doesn't actually celebrate when you leave. Instead, she may enjoy her alone time for a little while, but soon enough, she'll start to miss you. If you're gone too often and/or for too long, she may also begin exhibiting her loneliness. Each of the following are indicators that your cat needs to have you home more.

- Loss or increase in appetite
- Destructive behavior
- Minimal or excessive self-grooming
- Change in litter box habits
- Lethargy

Be sure to visit your vet to ensure that none of these behaviors are caused by a medical issue.



How Long Can I Leave My Cat Alone For?

Before you read the answer, how about you take a guess? Perhaps even ask any relatives or friends who are in the same room with you. Now, you're ready to read the answer (be prepared for a surprise):

The preferred maximum amount of time that a cat can be alone is eight hours for an adult, and four to six hours for a kitten. If you absolutely must, you may leave an adult alone for a period of up to 24 hours, but he may not be happy with you once you return.

Therefore, it's wise to get a good pet sitter who will enter your home once or twice per day when you go on vacation. Make sure the sitter will also stay in your home and visit with your cat for at least 15–20 minutes each time. Even if your cat is too shy to interact with them, she'll feel their presence and, therefore, will be a little less lonely.

How To Reduce Their Loneliness When You Must Leave

Even if you work from home like I do, there are some times when leaving is unavoidable. Fortunately, there are some steps you can follow to make your feline friend feel more comfortable when they're left alone in your home.

1. Make Sure You Fill Their Food And Water Bowls

You should always give your cat a meal before you leave. Otherwise, his food anxiety could ramp up. It's also wise to not only fill his water bowl, but to put out at least one extra. That way, he'll still have some water even if he happens to knock the other bowl over.

REMEMBER: Many cats have food anxiety, which most likely stems from their natural instincts. In the wild, they would be constantly searching for their next meal. Even though they don't have to engage in this behavior anymore, some cats will become anxious and/or upset when they can see the bottom of their bowl.

2. Leave Entertainment For Them

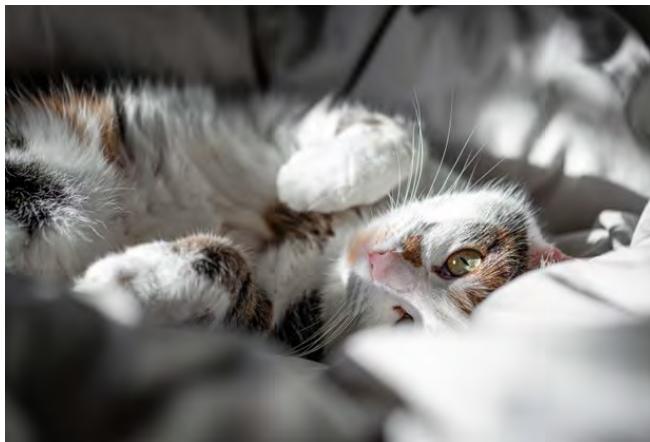
There are many different ways you can entertain your cats, even if you're not home! First, we recommend getting a variety of different toys and leaving them around your house. Don't leave any toys you'd have to monitor, though. Instead, choose cat-safe items such as a stuffed mouse or jingle ball.

It's also wise to make sure you leave them a scratching post. This will give them a way to stretch their muscles and burn off excess energy. You can also purchase a toy that can be controlled via your phone.

Another thing you can do is leave the TV on or give your feline friend a tablet. If you choose the tablet route, set them up with a ‘cat TV’ video from YouTube or a cat game. Alternatively, you can put on some music that’s specifically made for cats. Most cat music is made to soothe anxiety and help them fall asleep.

3. Clean Their Litter Box

Did you know that if your cat goes outside their litter box, they may be trying to communicate with you? In many cases, the reason they’ve gone to the bathroom just outside of their litter box is because they think their box is too dirty. To avoid these issues, scoop out their waste before you leave home



4. Give Them A Nice, Comfortable Bed

While you’re gone, the odds are extremely high that your cat will take at least one or two naps. In fact, cats sleep an average of 16 hours per day! They want their naps to be super comfy too, so be sure to leave spaces where they can do just that.

I’ve provided several different spaces for Riley, and each one includes a blanket. I also leave my bedroom door open because that’s one of his favorite places to sleep. If your cat has a room he tends to prefer, ensure you leave the door open for him.

SIDE NOTE: Because Riley loves to sleep on my bed, but I need it to be super dark, I’ve put a curtain up over the doorway. This allows him to come and go without scratching at the door, but it also provides me with the darkness I need. As with almost anything else, there is always a workaround

14 that will satisfy both of you. Get creative!

5. Consider Getting A Second Cat

This can be a great idea – or a terrible idea – depending on your feline friend’s personality. If he’s spent time around other cats and seems to like it, adopting a second cat may keep him from getting as lonely.

Things to remember include adopting another cat that’s around the same age as your existing cat and giving them a proper introduction. For cats, this means letting them sniff each other through a door, then letting them sleep with a blanket the other cat has interacted with. Finally, provide them with short, monitored visits for a couple of days before you allow them to roam freely.

NOTE: It can take between 8 and 12 months for cats to truly become friends – if they ever do. Don’t rush their relationship, but do intervene if their fighting becomes too intense.

6. Get A Pet Sitter

Cats love routines. Anything that throws them off will upset them, so it’s best to keep them on their routines even when you’re away. How should you accomplish this? Hire a pet sitter or get a friend to stop by!

If your schedule doesn’t permit you to keep up their routines, it’s a good idea to have someone else check in on them. That way, they’ll have the opportunity to play with a human, regardless of whether you can be there or not.

Keep in mind that it’s also smart to socialize your cat with different humans. This should make them more tolerant of humans, which will make things easier for delivery drivers, apartment maintenance, etc.

7. Take Time To Bond With Your Cat When You Come Home

Once you return home, your cat is likely to become excited. She’ll most likely meow and/or chirp at you, and you can also expect her to rub your legs. To make her feel safer, take a few minutes out to bond with her. Whether you pet her, groom her, or cuddle up with her, it’ll go a long way toward making her feel comfortable.



Giving Your Cat Some Alone Time Can Make Your Relationship Stronger

Household cats will miss you because they've been domesticated to need a companion. At the same time, however, their ancestors were solitary creatures. Because every cat has both of these qualities, it can give them confidence and actually strengthen your bond if you leave them alone for short periods of time.

REMEMBER: Spending some time alone is good, but your cat needs you to strike the proper balance. If your cat comes looking for you every single day, you might be giving him a bit too much alone time.

Pandemic Kitties

Did you notice that your cat became a bit grumpier during the pandemic? Most people assumed this was because they were home all the time and that their cat wanted them to leave more often. Was there any truth to this?

Your cat DID notice the change, but it was upsetting to them because you changed their routine, not because you were home all the time. If you still work from home, be aware that this presents pros and cons to your feline friend.

Pros

- Increased playtime and petting
- Increased social time with their humans
- Greater attention can be given to a pet's needs and behavioral changes

Cons

- Disruptions to their usual routine
- More unwanted social interaction (with kids, other pets, etc.)
- Frustration because you're home, but you're not emotionally accessible to them
- Confusion around your being home at times you previously weren't.

Cats Like To Be Around People But They Need A Routine

Rachel Gellar, a certified cat behaviorist, says that "cats strongly love their humans and want to be with us." She went on to say, "Your cat may sit near you or choose a napping spot that is in the same room where you are sitting to feel more connected."

In other words, your cat wants to be near you, but he may not want you to be all up in his business. They derive comfort from simply being near you, and some cats simply don't have an interest in climbing on top of your lap. This doesn't mean he doesn't love you, though. It just means he prefers to show his love in a different way.

No matter how your cat shows love, the most important thing you can do for him is develop a cat routine. Also, if he shows any of the following behaviors, back off and give him some space.

- Leaving or walking away during an interaction
- Overstimulation as you pet him (head turns, cranky meows, tail swishing, scratching, biting, etc.)
- Struggling to get out of your grasp

The last thing you want to do is keep forcing attention on your cat when he's not interested. All it'll do is make him suspicious of you, which is not what you want. Instead, back off, allow him to cool down, and let him approach you first next time. All of these are techniques that can be used to give a cat back his power, which can prevent him from losing confidence.



Try To Relax Your Feline Friend

When all is said and done, pretty much everything in a cat's life revolves around their level of stress. Rachel Gellar goes so far as to say, "Stress is a cat's worst enemy." She explained that "letting them choose when and how much they spend time with you during the day" is key.

Gellar further explained the role of cat toys in keeping your cat happy and distracted if you work from home. "Keep in mind that play should simulate hunting, which means that keeping toys away from cats creates immeasurable frustration — this is the last thing you want to do."

How do you know if your cat is stressed out? Look for the following indicators:

- Change in general mood
- Change in activity level
- Avoidance of their litter box
- Hiding
- Aggressive behavior
- Refusal to eat
- Excessive meowing
- Compulsive behaviors
- Pacing or inability to settle

Fortunately, you can help a stressed out cat relax by doing the following:

- Provide a cat tree
- Reduce cat fights

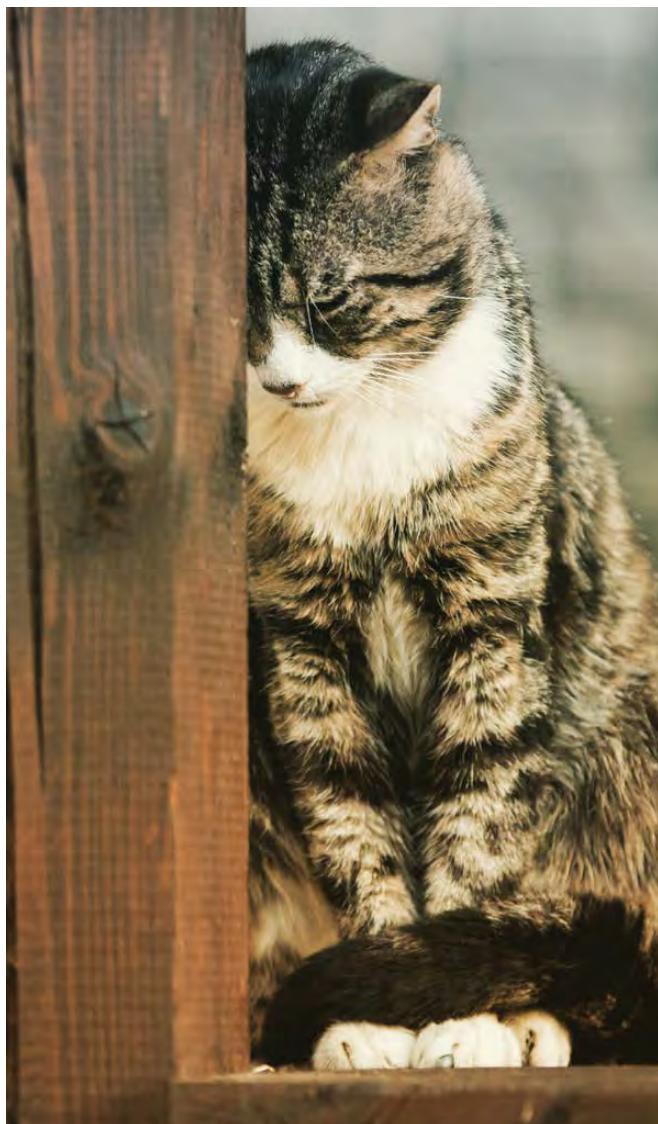
- Offer food puzzle toys
- Use calming pheromones
- Improve their litter box experience

REMEMBER: Your own behavior may be causing your cat to feel stressed out. Your cat is likely to mimic your emotions, so be sure to destress yourself, too!

Final Thoughts

It's official – cats LOVE to know where their humans are and what they're doing. Although they will happily take some alone time throughout the day, they generally want to be near you.

Your best bet is to give them attention when they seek it out, and to leave them alone the rest of the time. If you want to know if they're open to being petted, give them a quick stroke or two, and you'll find out!



Did you know that cats don't have a very high thirst drive? This is something that goes back to the very earliest cats that first evolved from desert-dwelling carnivores. In nature, a cat receives the majority of its moisture content from his or her prey. When they came across some extra water, they would drink it, but this wasn't how they stayed hydrated.

Today, most cats live indoors and don't have to hunt prey, but their instincts haven't changed. If your cat is fed a solely kibble diet, he or she isn't likely to get enough water, regardless of how many water bowls are available. For cats who eat some wet food, however, they'll receive a lot more moisture. That's because wet food naturally contains more water, and is therefore more like they're actually hunting their prey.

If you want to ensure your cat remains hydrated – and also gets enough food – try giving them a combination of wet food and kibble. For instance, I give Riley a bowl of kibble, along with five to six cans of cat food per day. Even if you only give your feline friend one can of wet food per day, though, it's still going to be much better than not giving him any at all.

Is My Cat Dehydrated?

Due to their low thirst drive, a cat doesn't usually feel the need to seek out water until she's already getting dehydrated. Unfortunately, dehydration can happen quickly, and it's a serious threat to your kitty's health. Here are five indicators that your cat isn't consuming enough water.

1. Sunken Eyes

Do your cat's eyes appear to be sunken? Or, alternatively, do they appear to be glazed over? Both of these are signs that your cat needs to increase his intake of water.

2. Skin Elasticity

You can check for dehydration by very gently lifting the skin from between their shoulder blades. As soon as you release their skin, it should return immediately to its regular form. However, if it doesn't bounce right back, this means your cat is dehydrated.



14 Ways To Get Your Cat To Drink More Water

3. Dry Mouth

Your cat's gums are supposed to be moist and pink. Take your finger and press against her gums. They should turn white but become pink again after you remove your finger. If they stay white, your cat definitely needs more water.

4. Panting

Dogs may pant on a regular basis, but this isn't normal for a cat. If your cat suddenly begins to pant, it's a prime indicator that something is wrong. In most cases, it means they've become dehydrated.

5. Constipation

You should be cleaning out your cat's litter box every single day, which will provide you with a lot of insight into their health. If you notice that they're suddenly not making bowel movements as much as usual, there is a good chance they need to drink more water.

What Should I Do If My Cat Appears To Be Dehydrated?

Convincing your cat to drink more water is clearly a priority, but it's also very important that you take

your kitty to the vet. Signs of dehydration may be linked to simply not drinking enough, but they may also indicate a serious underlying condition such as diabetes, heatstroke, or kidney disease. Therefore, it's always best to make sure by visiting their veterinarian.

How Much Water Is Necessary?

This can vary a bit from cat to cat, but there is an average guideline. For every 10 pounds that your cat weighs, he should receive 1 to 1-1/4 cups of water (if he only eats kibble) or $\frac{1}{2}$ cup (if he also eats wet food).

So, for example, my 21-pound cat, Riley, should be getting around $\frac{3}{4}$ of a cup since he eats wet food and kibble. A cat I had in the past, Mephi, was 15 pounds and only ate kibble. For her, it would take about 1-1/2 cups per day.

Don't become overly concerned if your cat consumes slightly more or less than the recommended amount. But if they don't drink enough on a regular basis, you're going to have to find ways to encourage them to drink more.

Hydration Can Prevent Many Issues

Without proper hydration, your feline friend will be lacking in several areas. Hydration is key for temperature regulation, digestion, normal electrolyte concentrations, delivering oxygen and nutrients to organs/the body, and joint lubrication.

Other issues caused by dehydration include diarrhea, vomiting, diabetes, kidney disease, fever, and hyperthyroidism.

Top 14 Ways To Get Your Cat To Increase Water Consumption

Now that you have a firm understanding of how important it is for your feline friend to remain properly hydrated, let's look at some tips for getting your cat to drink more water.

1. Change Their Water Daily

Have you ever allowed your cat's water to sit in his bowl for a few days? Everyone gets busy from time-to-time, but it's highly recommended that you DON'T let this happen on a regular basis. You see, lots of things can get into their water – including their own fur – and this will discourage your cat from drinking.

What you need to do is ensure you clean out their bowl every single day. This will make their water appear more appetizing, and they'll be more likely to stop for a drink.

NOTE: If you see your cat stop and stare at his water bowl for a long time without drinking it, you'll know that it's past due for a change.

2. Provide Multiple Water Bowls

Getting your cat to drink enough often requires placing water bowls throughout your home. This is especially important if you have more than one cat. Does your home have two or more levels? Make sure you've got a minimum of one water bowl per floor.

REMEMBER: Your cat doesn't have a high thirst drive. Therefore, if they have to go downstairs to get a drink, they'll probably just decide to skip it. You don't want them to choose this option, so be sure they have an easily accessible water dish nearby.

3. Provide Them With Wet Food

Cats that eat only kibble can get themselves into trouble. Instead, provide wet food and/or wet food and kibble.

Dr. Debra Zoran, who works as a professor at Texas A&M College of Veterinary Medicine & Biomedical Sciences said, "Cats that eat only dry foods consume less water overall and are more prone to dehydration."

When we compare cat food labels, it becomes very clear why this happens. The average amount of moisture in kibble is 10–12%. Meanwhile, this number shoots up to 75–78% in wet food. As you can see, this is a huge difference.

If you're planning to introduce them to wet food

for the first time, be sure to take it slow. Offer a variety and take note of which choices they like the best. Cats can be notoriously picky, and may prefer seafood gravy or chicken pate.

4. Wash Their Bowl Regularly



You refill their bowl on a daily basis, but how often should you wash it? The answer is at least once per week. Unless you have bowls you alternate, you'll probably want to give their bowl a hand wash so they can get it back relatively quickly. And, speaking of

which, since you probably have to take their bowl into the kitchen to refill it, why not give it a quick wash daily? This will make it the most appealing to your feline friend, after all.

5. Try Out Different Bowls

The shape and material of your cat's water bowl is highly important to them.

- Choose a shallow, wide bowl that your cat's whiskers can stay above while he's drinking.
- Stainless steel works the best for cats, and it won't hold onto the smells or tastes of previous food/water.

6. Put Water In Their Kibble

Let's say your cat is a firm believer in kibble and doesn't want to eat wet food. How can you increase their water intake then? Well, one thing you can try is mixing a little bit of water into their kibble. This will provide them with more moisture, which is a win-win.

NOTE: If you try this mixture and your cat refuses to eat it, remove their food bowl and replace it with regular kibble. The last thing you want to do is get your cat to stop eating.

7. Turn On A Faucet

I used to have a cat named Kali who generally loved drinking water, but not from her water bowl. I had to leave the bathtub tap slightly on so that it

was constantly dripping. I'd find her in the bathtub drinking the water at all hours of the day and night, but if I only offered her a water dish instead, she'd snub it.

Alternatively, offer them a cat water fountain. Some cats will absolutely love them, while other cats won't like them at all. Again, it's going to take some trial and error to find what's best for your specific cat.

8. Try Different Water Options

Cats can be extremely picky when it comes to the taste of water. While my cat, Riley, drinks water from the tap without any issues, some cats will act as if it tastes absolutely horrible. If your cat does this, you're going to want to experiment with different options, including bottled or filtered water.

REMEMBER: For the most part, your cat won't eat or drink something that she doesn't like. Having the thought process of "she'll drink when she's thirsty" will NOT help. It's essential to offer her water that she likes.

9. Chill Your Cat's Water

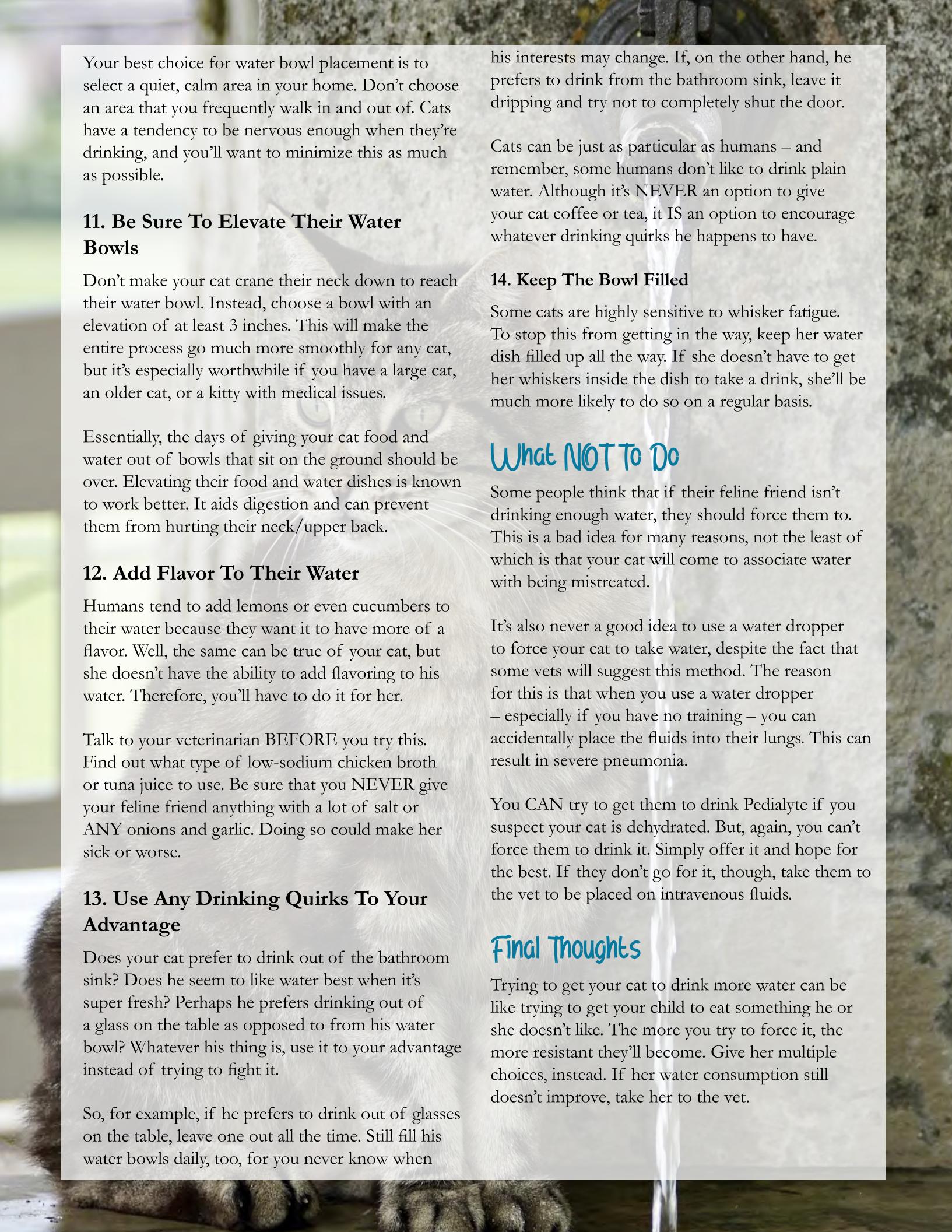
We bet that you know several humans who like their water served in different ways. One might like room temperature water, another might want it from the refrigerator, and yet another might only like it if it has ice cubes in it. Well, cats are the same way!

If room temperature water doesn't seem to be cutting it, try introducing a few ice cubes and see how they react. Not only might they prefer their water ice cold, but they also might like licking the ice cubes!

10. Choose A New Location

Okay, so you know that you should offer several water bowls, but do you have any idea where they should be placed? First off, do NOT place them anywhere near a litter box. This is just going to gross your cat out, just as it would gross you out to have your water placed next to the toilet.

Secondly, do NOT place a water dish right next to their food bowl. You see, in the wild, cats naturally assume that any water they find that's right next to their food is also poisoned.



Your best choice for water bowl placement is to select a quiet, calm area in your home. Don't choose an area that you frequently walk in and out of. Cats have a tendency to be nervous enough when they're drinking, and you'll want to minimize this as much as possible.

11. Be Sure To Elevate Their Water Bowls

Don't make your cat crane their neck down to reach their water bowl. Instead, choose a bowl with an elevation of at least 3 inches. This will make the entire process go much more smoothly for any cat, but it's especially worthwhile if you have a large cat, an older cat, or a kitty with medical issues.

Essentially, the days of giving your cat food and water out of bowls that sit on the ground should be over. Elevating their food and water dishes is known to work better. It aids digestion and can prevent them from hurting their neck/upper back.

12. Add Flavor To Their Water

Humans tend to add lemons or even cucumbers to their water because they want it to have more of a flavor. Well, the same can be true of your cat, but she doesn't have the ability to add flavoring to his water. Therefore, you'll have to do it for her.

Talk to your veterinarian BEFORE you try this. Find out what type of low-sodium chicken broth or tuna juice to use. Be sure that you NEVER give your feline friend anything with a lot of salt or ANY onions and garlic. Doing so could make her sick or worse.

13. Use Any Drinking Quirks To Your Advantage

Does your cat prefer to drink out of the bathroom sink? Does he seem to like water best when it's super fresh? Perhaps he prefers drinking out of a glass on the table as opposed to from his water bowl? Whatever his thing is, use it to your advantage instead of trying to fight it.

So, for example, if he prefers to drink out of glasses on the table, leave one out all the time. Still fill his water bowls daily, too, for you never know when

his interests may change. If, on the other hand, he prefers to drink from the bathroom sink, leave it dripping and try not to completely shut the door.

Cats can be just as particular as humans – and remember, some humans don't like to drink plain water. Although it's NEVER an option to give your cat coffee or tea, it IS an option to encourage whatever drinking quirks he happens to have.

14. Keep The Bowl Filled

Some cats are highly sensitive to whisker fatigue. To stop this from getting in the way, keep her water dish filled up all the way. If she doesn't have to get her whiskers inside the dish to take a drink, she'll be much more likely to do so on a regular basis.

What NOT To Do

Some people think that if their feline friend isn't drinking enough water, they should force them to. This is a bad idea for many reasons, not the least of which is that your cat will come to associate water with being mistreated.

It's also never a good idea to use a water dropper to force your cat to take water, despite the fact that some vets will suggest this method. The reason for this is that when you use a water dropper – especially if you have no training – you can accidentally place the fluids into their lungs. This can result in severe pneumonia.

You CAN try to get them to drink Pedialyte if you suspect your cat is dehydrated. But, again, you can't force them to drink it. Simply offer it and hope for the best. If they don't go for it, though, take them to the vet to be placed on intravenous fluids.

Final Thoughts

Trying to get your cat to drink more water can be like trying to get your child to eat something he or she doesn't like. The more you try to force it, the more resistant they'll become. Give her multiple choices, instead. If her water consumption still doesn't improve, take her to the vet.



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