

# Litter Box Issues With Your Cat

Some common reasons why cats don't use the litter box are medical, behavioral, surface preference, location preferences, or any combination thereof. In order to figure out why your cat has stopped using the litter box, you'll need to do some digging.

To make things even more complicated, sometimes the reason the litter box problem initially began may no longer be the same reason it's continuing. For example, your cat may have stopped using the litter box because of a location stress (the dryer bumping while running next to the litter box), and has now developed a habit of using the corner of the room where it is quieter. You will need to address all the factors in order to resolve the problem. Let's look closer at the reasons why your cat might have stopped using their litter box.



## Medical Issues

- The most common medical issue that will have cats avoiding the litter box is a urinary issue. Urinary tract infection (UTI) or crystals in the urine may cause painful urination that cats will often associate with the litter box, causing them to avoid it.
- What can you do?
  - A trip to your veterinarian for an examination and some medication will oftentimes resolve the issue.

## Behavioral Issues

- Anxiety can also cause cats to go to the bathroom in inappropriate places. Stress due to a move or having new people or animals around may cause cats to avoid the litter box until they are more comfortable.
- What can you do?
  - Make every experience with the new person or new animal a positive one. If the stress is having a new person around, have them take on the role of primary caretaker and allow them to be the one who feeds, treats, and plays with the cat to reduce the stress associated with them.
- Aversion to the box could also be a behavioral problem if something negative happened to them while they were in the box. For instance, if there was construction in your home that occurred near where your cat uses the litter box, then they may have developed fear of using the box. Another example is if the litter box is not kept clean enough for your cat, they may choose to eliminate somewhere they perceive is more sanitary.
- What can you do?
  - For fear-based aversion: try setting up a litter box in a new location away from the thing that caused them to be afraid.
  - For cleanliness aversion: make sure your cat's litter box is kept very clean, which all depends on the opinion of your cat. Some can handle one cleaning daily, while others prefer scooping multiple times per day. You can also increase the amount of litter boxes that are in your home. You should try to have one more litter box than the number of cats you own.

## Surface Preferences

Surface preferences are when your cat uses the same surface type to eliminate. For example, soft surfaces like laundry or blankets, rather than in the litter box.

- What can you do?
  - Add some of that surface type near the litter box. Put a towel under the box to encourage them near it. You'll also have to make the spots where they were going to the bathroom inappropriately undesirable. Make sure the area is very clean and then put something in the area the cat will not want to be near such as aluminum foil or citrus essential oils.

## Location Preferences

- Location preferences are when your cat likes to use a certain type of location as its bathroom instead of the box – for instance, a quiet corner in the basement.
- What can you do?
  - Put a litter box in the location that your cat has been eliminating in, if possible. If it's not a convenient location to keep the litter box in, wait until the cat has been using the box for at least one month, and then slowly move the box to where you'd like it to be.

Remember to never punish or yell at your cat when they stop using the litter box. Cats don't stop using their litter boxes because they're mad or upset with you; they are simply doing what works best for them. Work together to solve the problem with your cat!