

Cat Litter

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- Many owners prefer scoopable litters because they control odors and absorb liquid (clump) well.
- Cats may stop using the litterbox if something about it becomes unappealing.

What You Need to Know

A variety of cat litters are available commercially, including litters made of clay, plastic, wheat, sawdust, newspaper pellets, and corn cobs. The choice depends on what matters most to you and your cat. You may have to try a few to see what you and your cat like. Most cats prefer unscented, scoopable litter because of its sandlike texture. Many owners prefer scoopable litters because they control odors and absorb liquid (clump) well, making it easy for owners to scoop out urine “balls.” This leaves the remaining litter dry and odor free.

Unscented litters are preferred by cats because they want to be able to identify some of their own scent in their litter. Perfume, fragrance, or deodorizer is not necessary to prevent litterbox odor and can make a litter undesirable to a cat. If you scoop out the wastes at least twice a day, the litterbox should be odor free.

If you require a completely dust-free litter, you might prefer newspaper pellets, which have an ingredient that helps control odor. Regular shredded newspaper isn't recommended because it's messy and doesn't control odor.

A Cat's Basic Requirements for Litter

- The litter should be acceptable for standing on.
- It should allow easy digging.
- It should be odorless.

Reasons a Cat Won't Use the Litterbox

Cats are usually easy to litter train because they are naturally clean and prefer to bury their waste.

However, cats may stop using the litterbox if something about it becomes unappealing.

If your cat won't use the litterbox, try addressing the following bulleted list, but do not punish your cat. He or she may have a medical or behavior problem that your veterinarian can address.

- The type of litter was changed. Most cats prefer an unscented, scoopable (sandlike) litter. If you have a new kitten or cat, provide the litter that he or she has been using. If you would like to start using a different litter, gradually start mixing it into the original litter so that your cat won't reject it.
- The litterbox location was changed. Most cats prefer a quiet place with several escape routes.
- The litterbox is dirty. Scoop it out at least twice daily, add new litter as needed, and wash the box with baking soda or an unscented soap and fill it with clean litter at least once every 2 weeks.
- The litterbox is too small.

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- The type of litterbox was changed.
- The litterbox has a liner or hood, which some cats dislike.
- The litterbox isn't easily accessible.
- There aren't enough litterboxes. Provide one litterbox per cat, plus one extra box.
- There's too much litter in the litterbox. Most cats prefer the litter to be one to two inches deep.
- Your cat's food dishes are too close to the litterbox.

If you continue to have litterbox issues with your cat, let your veterinarian know.