

***Most Common Reasons  
that Cats Refuse the  
Litter Box***

1. The litter box is always dirty.
2. The type of litter is not desirable, such as scented litter, or those with large, rough granules.
3. The litter box is too small. Kitty can not move around or fit.
4. There is not enough litter in the box. Kitty needs enough litter to be able to dig and bury.
5. The litter box is in a location that was scary or noisy.
6. There are too many cats sharing the same litter box.
7. Another cat ambushes kitty from inside the litter box.
8. If your cat likes to claw around the outside of the litter box, he may not like the feeling of the cement floor. Consider putting the box on top of a small rug.
9. Your cat associates the litter box with punishment. For example, the cat was punished for eliminating outside the box, and then put into the box.
10. Your cat has a medical problem that causes pain during urination or defecation. See your vet.

**If in doubt, consult your  
vet**

If you feel that you have tried everything to solve your cat's litter box issues, and are still experiencing problems, talk to your vet.



Cats can suffer from medical conditions that cause them to urinate more frequently, or that cause pain when they are going to the bathroom. The cat associates the litter box with the pain it feels, and therefore thinks that by not returning to the box, it will no longer feel the pain.

Your vet can prescribe treatment if a medical issue is causing the problem. In addition, your vet can advise you about long term solutions to litter box problems, which might include changes in diet or litter box habits.

# Solving Litter Box Problems



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## Solving your cat's litter box problems

One of the most common reasons that cats are surrendered to animal shelters is for litter box problems. Despite the frustrations these issues may cause, cat litter box problems can often be easily solved. Ask yourself the following questions if your cat won't use the litter box.

### When was the last time the litter box was cleaned?

Imagine if you were forced to use a toilet that hadn't been flushed in several days. Now imagine if you had to share that toilet with several members of your family. Doesn't sound very appealing, does it? This may be one reason why your cat looks for another place to relieve himself, rather than using the litter box.

The litter box should be cleaned at least once every day. If you have multiple cats, it's a good idea to have multiple litter boxes. Consider placing one litter box on each level if you live in a multi-story home.

### What kind of litter are you using?

In the wild, cats instinctively bury their waste in sand. Kitty litter was designed to draw upon that instinct. Unfortunately, many of the brands of litter on the market today no longer resemble sand in texture and smell. If you are having litter box problems, consider going back to an unscented litter with tiny granules that resemble sand.

### What kind of litter box are you using?

The size of the litterbox is very important. The litter box that was the appropriate size for your cat when it was a kitten may now be too small for your adult cat. Make sure that kitty has plenty of room to move around in the box.

Hooded litterboxes can be offensive to some cats. Whether it's the feeling of being in a small space, or the trapped odors of their waste, some cats simply won't use hooded litter boxes.

On the other hand, if your cat has trouble keeping his waste inside the box, a hooded litter box might be the answer. Some cats stand up too high or hang their rear ends out of the box when they urinate. A hooded litter box eliminates this possibility.



### Is the litter box located in a high-traffic or noisy area?

Be sure that your cat's litter box is located in a quiet, out of the way area where kitty can feel a sense of safety and privacy. A litter box located next to a noisy washing machine or furnace might frighten your cat, making him less likely to risk that experience in the future.

Make sure that your cat can easily get to the location where the litter box is placed. A kitten or elderly cat may have difficulty getting up or down the stairs in time. If the box is inside a room or closet with a door, make sure that the door is always open, or cut a "cat door" in the bottom of the door.

### Is your cat under stress?

Changes to a cat's environment: moving, the addition of a new family member or pet, unfamiliar visitors, etc., can cause your pet to not use the litter box. Even changes to the litter box, such as a change in the brand of litter or the kind of box, can cause kitty to stop using it.

If you've recently made a change, (such as the brand or type of litter, or kind of litter box) try changing back to what your cat is used to. This may solve your problem.

If your cat is suffering from anxiety, consult your vet for advice on how to best alleviate kitty's stress.

### Is your cat returning to an area that had previously been soiled?

A cat's sense of smell is significantly more sensitive than a human's. If the cat can smell traces of urine in an area that had been soiled in the past, he will continue to re-use that spot until the odor is completely eliminated.

It is important to clean urine stains as quickly and thoroughly as possible. If the area is still wet when you find it, start by cleaning with white vinegar to neutralize the odor. If that does not work, or if the area is already dry, use an enzymatic stain and odor remover available at your pet supply store. Cleaning with soap or other detergents can actually set the odors in, making them impossible to remove.