

CAT ENRICHMENT GUIDE:

Enhancing Feline Well-being

Enrichment is essential for promoting a cat's physical and mental health. In the wild, cats spend much of their time hunting, exploring, and engaging their senses. Indoor cats require alternative ways to express these natural behaviors. This guide outlines various types of enrichment that cater to feline instincts and promote welfare.

1. **Work-to-Eat Toys (Food Puzzles):** These toys make cats “work” for their food, encouraging problem-solving and slowing down mealtime.

Examples:

- Puzzle feeders (e.g., Trixie Activity Boards, Doc & Phoebe's Indoor Hunting Feeder)
- Treat balls or rolling dispensers
- DIY options: Muffin tin with balls over food, toilet paper tubes filled with kibble

2. **Interactive Toys:** These toys promote play and movement, often mimicking prey or providing a shared activity with the human.

Examples:

- Wand toys
- Laser pointers (used with caution, always end with a tangible toy “catch”)
- Battery-operated moving toys (e.g., Hexbug mice, PetSafe Cheese toy)

Tips:

- Rotate toys regularly to keep them novel
- Use scheduled interactive play sessions (5–10 min, 1–2 times daily)

3. **Scent Enrichment:** Cats have a highly developed sense of smell, and novel scents can be intriguing and enriching.

Examples:

- Catnip, silvertop, valerian (try a variety to find individual preferences)
- Scented items: Swap blankets with other animals (if safe), use pet safe hunting scents
- Synthetic pheromones: Products like Feliway can reduce stress



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4. **Simulated Hunting Enrichment:** Replicates the stalk-chase-pounce-kill-eat sequence of wild hunting.

Examples:

- Indoor hunting feeders: Hide small food-dispensing mice around the house
- Toss kibble: Scatter kibble across the floor or up a cat tree for your cat to “hunt”
- Interactive prey play: Mimic mouse or bird movements with wand toys

Tips:

- Feed small meals throughout the day using these methods
- Combine with a feeding schedule that supports natural routines

5. **Visual Enrichment:** Stimulating the cat’s vision can engage their curiosity and offer passive entertainment.

Examples:

- Bird or squirrel feeders outside windows
- Cat-safe videos: Fish tanks, bird videos on YouTube or DVD

DIY Ideas:

- Create a “cat TV” by setting up a perch by a window
- Rotate visual elements: shiny objects, aquarium screensavers, etc.

6. **Audio Enrichment:** Sounds can calm or stimulate cats, depending on the type and context.

Examples:

- Nature sounds: Birdsong, rustling leaves
- Calming music: Cat-specific playlists (e.g., Music for Cats by David Teie)
- Note: Avoid loud, sudden, or unpredictable noises that may startle.

7. **Environmental & Physical Enrichment:** Creating an enriched physical environment supports climbing, hiding, and exploration.

Examples:

- Cat trees, perches, and shelves
- Cardboard boxes, tunnels, paper bags
- Window hammocks or catios