



## Litter box training kittens

While this may not seem like a very important subject at first, the litter box can quickly become the major focus of your attention should your cat decide to stop using it. Elimination disorders are one of the biggest reasons for cats to be given up to shelters, and one of the most common problems for which people seek veterinary advice. Here are some important points to keep in mind:

### New kittens

It is important to make sure your kitten knows the location of the litter box in her new surroundings. Make sure the box is not in a noisy or hard-to-reach place. Soon after you bring your kitten home, take her to the litter box at a quiet time. Place her into the litter box, but do not worry if she jumps right out again.

Most cats will make the adjustment to a new litter box without any problems. However, if there are any accidents, don't scold or punish your cat. Yelling or using a squirt bottle will only confuse and scare your cat, and she won't understand why you are upset. Instead, clean up the accident with an enzyme cleaner to remove stains and odor. Then go back to square one, placing the kitten in the litter box frequently until she starts using it. If the accidents continue, or if you are noticing any diarrhea or straining, have your kitten examined by your veterinarian to rule out any possible medical problems. Cats with urinary tract disease or intestinal parasites may stop using the litter box.

### Number of boxes

The rule of thumb here is that you should provide one litter box per cat, plus one extra. While this may seem excessive to us, cats are very fastidious and some cats will not use a litter box that other cats have used. Some cats also prefer to use one box to urinate in and another to defecate in. If your house has several levels, make sure there are litter boxes on every floor.

### Location

- Cats prefer to use the litter box in a quiet, private place where they feel safe.
- Loud noises (buzzers on washers and dryers, etc), people walking in and out, or being startled by a dog or challenged by another cat as they leave the litter box, can be disturbing enough to make your cat choose another location.
- If your dog tries to steal a snack from the cat's litter box, try placing a baby gate across the doorway to the room the litter box is in (this would also work in a closet doorway, if needed). Place the gate a few inches off the floor so that the cat can get under it but the dog cannot. If your dog is small enough to go under the gate, position the bottom of the gate at the floor and place a stepstool in front of the gate to help the cat jump up and over.

