

Bark!

BCSPCA

kids speaking for animals
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Fit for a Feline

Make your home welcoming for a cat (or two!). Here are a few of the basics to help create a space fit for a feline.

Fresh water and food

Cats need fresh water every day and food up to three times a day. Feed both dry and canned food, and follow the label for portion sizes. If you have multiple cats, you will need multiple dishes in separate locations so each cat can eat and drink undisturbed (same for litter boxes, too!).



A scratching post

A must for any cat's living space! Cats use scratching posts to help shed the outer covering on their claws, to scent mark (from special glands in their paws) and to stretch. Cats like to stretch after waking up or when entering a room, so place the post close to an entrance way or near where your cat sleeps.



Hiding places

Sometimes cats just need to get away from it all. Give your cat plenty of places to hide, like cardboard boxes, cupboards and paper bags. Make a tent out of blankets and you're sure to get a visit!



A look-out

Cats like to get up high and perch. Why? It makes them feel safe to be able to view their surroundings from above. Shelves, window ledges and tall scratching posts with resting platforms all make great perching places. At least one should be big enough to let your cat stretch out fully.



Kitty Cautions

Cats need a safe environment, so watch out for these potential dangers!



FOOD FEARS

Automated feeders may seem convenient, but they can jam, resulting in hungry kitties. Instead, a real person should always fill the food dish. Just like human food, canned cat food can spoil, so make sure it doesn't sit out too long. As for beverages, stick to fresh water. Some cats love to lap up milk, but they can't digest it properly.

WINDOW WORRIES

Cats love to perch on window ledges, but if you want your cat to stay in, be sure the window isn't left open! If your windows have blinds, keep the cords out of reach. Cats may like to bat at them, but can easily become caught and strangled.



HIDING HAZARDS

Cats feel safe when they have places to hide, but they need to be able to escape, too. Keep tabs on your cat so she doesn't end up trapped in a drawer or cupboard. And, while paper bags can be fun places to hide, keep plastic grocery bags away from Fluffy – she could get tangled in the bag.



TOY TROUBLES

Not all cat toys are created equal. Avoid toys with string or small pieces your cat could swallow. Check toys frequently and replace worn-out ones. Some toys contain catnip, which can make some cats aggressive or hyperactive.



Ways to play

Just like kids, cats need toys. Choose a variety of toys that help cats mimic natural hunting behaviours such as chasing, batting, pouncing and biting – like a ball-in-circle toy, feather wand, Cat Dancer® or fake mouse. You can even help your cat “hunt” for food by hiding kibble around the house or making a puzzle feeder (go to spca.bc.ca/crafts for instructions)!



PLANT PROBLEMS

House plants often look tasty to cats, but they can be poisonous. Check the Animal Poison Control website (aspca.org/apcc) before bringing a plant into your home. While munching on cat grass isn't poisonous, eating too much can upset tummies and should be monitored.



Your adoption option?

The BC SPCA!

This cat care guide has information on everything you need to take care of a cat. But where should you get your cat? A pet store? A “free” kitten from a friend? Make the SPCA your first adoption option. Here’s why.

Thousands of abandoned cats and kittens are brought to the SPCA every year. At the SPCA, cats wait in the shelter until they are adopted. Many wait months. In places where there are more cats than homes, the SPCA moves cats to larger cities so they get adopted sooner.

Very young kittens are placed in foster homes. For kittens without moms, caregivers bottle feed kittens every few hours until they are ready to be adopted. All SPCA cats

get vaccinations, flea control medicine, a spay or neuter (so we don’t get even more kittens) and lots more care (see below).

Adopting is easy. Bring your parents to any of the SPCA’s 36 shelters. Staff and volunteers will help pick out the cat of your dreams. There is an adoption fee between \$75 and \$179. That may seem like a lot but the SPCA provides cats with all the care items you would need to spend on a “free” cat.

Check out everything included with your adoption in the table below. Add up the total cost to see what a great deal it is when you make the BC SPCA your first adoption option!

List of expenses*	Free Cat	BC SPCA Cat
Neuter / spay (\$100 - \$150)	\$150	Free
Vaccinations	\$45	Free
Flea control	\$55	Free
De-worming	\$35	Free
ID (microchip or tattoo)	\$50	Free
Health check exam	\$50	Free
Vet insurance (first month)	\$45	Free
Hide, Perch & Go cat carrier	\$20	Free
Adoption fee	Free	\$75 – \$179
What does a “free cat” really cost?	???	\$75 – \$179

*Average cost for fees



Did you know cats are the most popular pets in Canada? 36% of all households have cats! Dogs are second at 32%.



Only 17% of people adopt their cats from an animal shelter! Help us change this. Tell your friends to adopt from the SPCA!



Answer: \$450 for a “free cat.”

Of the people with cats, most have two or more!

NO MORE KITTEN AROUND!

Caring for cats as they age



Compared to most other pets, **cats live a long time** – about 15 years on average. Some live into their twenties. That's more than 100 years old in human years!

Whether young or old, all cats eat, sleep, play and socialize – just in different ways. Below are some tips to help you care for your cat through the years.

EAT. Kittens should be fed **high quality kitten food** three to four times a day. Introduce them to foods with different **flavours and textures** so they get used to variety.

Switch to **high quality adult food** at six to eight months of age. Adult cats should be fed at least twice a day. Leaving food out all the time can lead to **overweight cats**. Seniors – cats aged 11 and up – should be given three to four **small meals** daily.



SLEEP. Cats sleep about **16 hours** a day.

Kittens and seniors sleep more than adult cats. Cats at any age, though, need to be able to **rest undisturbed**.

PLAY. Kittens love to **play**. Use **toys**, not hands and feet, to play with them. Otherwise, they might learn to play bite. Ouch!

Cats spend less time playing as they age. Use **food** to encourage adult cats to play. Give them **puzzle feeders** and toss kibble down the hall for them to chase. Hide kibble around the house for them to find. Playing keeps older cats **active and fit**.

SOCIALIZE. Introduce kittens to **new people, pets and experiences** like nail trims, teeth brushing, grooming, car trips and visits to the veterinarian. Reward them with **praise and treats** so they grow up **friendly and curious** rather than shy and afraid. Cats at any age can be **taught tricks** such as sit and come, just like dogs. Teach new tricks as they get older to keep them active.



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SAFETY FIRST! Curious kittens can easily get into **dangerous situations**. Keep kittens from **chewing** on electrical cords, **jumping** onto hot stovetops, **falling** into toilets and **climbing** into warm dryers.

Senior cats are also **vulnerable**. Make sure food and water dishes and beds are **lower to the floor**. Check that litter boxes are not too tall for older cats with stiff joints. Senior cats might also need **mats** to keep them from slipping as they walk, as well as **steps or ramps** to help them reach favourite resting spots.

What's my cat trying to tell me?



How can you tell if the cat you are petting is content or about to scratch you?

How do you know when the cat in your arms wants to be let down? Observing a cat's body language and studying her face provide clues on how she is feeling.



Umm, Kat! This cat is walking directly toward me with her tail straight up. Is she going to attack me?



Really, Fin? Can't you tell a friendly cat? Her tail is up and pointing at you.



Whoa! Why has your cat gone all Halloween?

When she arches her back and gets all puffy she is super angry.



Meet and greet: Friendly, relaxed dogs sway their tails from side-to-side. Cats do the opposite. A friendly, outgoing cat carries her tail stiff and high, often with the tip pointing toward the person or other cat she's greeting.



Hey Kat, why is your cat's tail swishing while I hold her? Does she want to do the dusting?



Very funny, Fin. I think you should put her down. Any second she is going to scratch and leap out of your arms.



Annoyed kitty: The first sign that a cat is getting agitated (it doesn't take much with some cats) is the swishing or flicking tail. This often occurs when a cat is being held against his will. If you don't put him down he will struggle, twist and scratch you in an attempt to escape your grasp. You may also see a resting cat start to "tail-swish" when another cat approaches. The relaxed cat is signaling he wants to be left alone.

Puffy cat: When a cat is feeling threatened she will puff her fur and arch her back. Think Halloween cat. Usually she will hiss and growl, show her teeth and extend her claws. Her tail will be puffed up and stick straight up. The cat is looking as big as possible, warning you to back away or she will attack.



Hey Kat, your cat just plopped down on the floor and is purring like a racing car!



Purr



she's happy! She loves you, Fin!

Are you sure you aren't a cat, Kat? You sure know a lot about them.



Let's just say I have a cat-Kat connection!

Match Kitty's mood...

You can tell when people are happy by the smiles on their faces. Cats also communicate their feelings with facial expressions. The position of their whiskers, ears and even the size of their pupils (the black centre part of the eye) are used to express their mood. A larger pupil generally means the cat is stressed or scared. See if you can match the face to the cat's mood.

Purrrrfectly relaxed: Cats purr for several reasons. Most cats purr when they are happy and content. Some purr when eating – especially nursing kittens. Cats also purr when they are sick or injured. Scientists think they do this because the vibration actually helps to stimulate healing and makes cats feel better.



A. Anxious: Uneasy, anxious cats flatten their ears. Their eyes are "wide-eyed" with enlarged black pupils. Whiskers are pulled flat against their faces.



B. Happy: Cat has perky, forward-facing ears. Whiskers are relaxed – not pulled back or fanned forward. Eye pupils are oval.



C. Pleasure: Relaxed cats who are feeling content while being petted have half-closed eyes. Their ears and whiskers are relaxed. They may slowly blink their eyes at you.



D. Frightened: Cats who are scared and feel threatened show their teeth and often hiss as a warning. Their ears pull back and flatten. Their whiskers fan out and extend forward. Eye pupils are large. These cats are telling you to back off or face an attack with teeth and claws.



E. Annoyed: Ears are upright and stiff. Cat has direct stare with eye pupils constricted to slits. Whiskers are fanned forward.



Inside or outside - what to do with you?

Should my cat live inside only or be allowed outside too? Across Canada, **the majority of cats live indoors** all the time with their caregivers.

There is a lot to consider before you allow your cat to go outdoors. Safety for one. Outdoor cats are more likely to get **hurt or sick**. Outside they are exposed to fleas, ticks, mites and internal **parasites** such as roundworms and hookworms! Not to mention getting **diseases or injuries** from other cats and wildlife.

Harsh weather is also hard on cats. On cold, rainy days, wet cats can't trap insulating air in their fur. If the temperature dips below zero, cats can quickly get **frostbite** in their ears, toes and tails.

It gets worse. Outdoor cats are at risk from **predators** – raccoons, dogs, coyotes and eagles have all been known to attack cats. As well, **loud noises** such as fireworks scare cats,

causing them to run into traffic or become **lost**.

Indoor-only cats have issues too. Some cats don't get enough exercise or become bored or frustrated. **Indoor cats need to run, play and explore**. To keep them active you must commit to playing with your cats daily. Also, provide toys and places for cats to climb, perch and investigate.

If a cat grew up going outside she may well scratch and meow to be let outside. To solve this, many caregivers create a secure screened outdoor area. **Outdoor enclosures keep your cats safe**. They also help prevent your cats from preying on songbirds and other wild animals such as tree frogs, rabbits, salamanders and butterflies. Even a small screened porch can satisfy cats who crave the outdoors. Making an outdoor cat enclosure can be a great family project.

These are just a few things to consider before deciding on an indoor or outdoor life for your cat.



My family is bringing our new cat home. Will she know to use the litter box?

Unlike dogs, cats don't need much housetraining. Even as kittens, instinct tells them to use a litter box! Just keep your cat in one room with her litter box (and places to sleep, eat and drink) to help her settle in. Then, after a few days, let her have the run of the house. She should return to the litter box when she has to go to the bathroom.

There are so many litter boxes to choose from! Which type is best?

Most cats prefer open litter boxes. Pick a litter box longer than your cat and wide enough for her to turn around easily. Boxes with lids not only trap in the smell, they can make cats feel trapped too.

My cat only needs one litter box, right?

Having one litter box per cat plus one extra is best. In multi-cat households, some cats refuse to share litter boxes.

Does it matter where the litter box goes?

Yes! Cats like privacy. Choose a quiet area away from household traffic – and her food and water dishes. Cats don't like to go to the bathroom near where they eat and drink. They also like to have an escape plan. The litter box location shouldn't make your cat feel cornered.

Wood, recycled paper, wheat, corn, clay, orange peels, peanut shells... which type of litter will my cat prefer?

Some cats are pickier about litter than others. In general, though, cats prefer litters with no scent and small grains rather than large pellets.



Most cats prefer an open litter box.

Most cats like litter with small grains (left) rather than large pellets (right).



Isn't more always better when it comes to litter?

Actually, most cats prefer shallow litter. Provide your cat with one to two inches of litter.

Get the scoop!

Uncovering the answers to common litter box questions

How often should the litter box be cleaned?

Cats have very sensitive noses. So, when you notice a smell coming from the litter box, just think how much worse it smells to your cat! Scoop the litter box once or twice a day. Completely change the litter every week or two. Avoid using any strong-smelling cleaning products that may irritate your cat. Instead, just wash the box out with warm, soapy water.



Scoop the litter box once or twice a day.

Healthy, happy kitties

Spending time with your cat will show you how she normally looks and behaves. When you notice something unusual – like a change in appetite or an accident outside the litter box – you'll know to take her to the vet right away! Here are some other important tips to help your cat live a long, healthy life.



My, what big teeth you have!

Your cat's teeth should be white and shiny. Her gums should be bright pink and moist to the touch. Bad breath, bleeding gums and brownish teeth could all be signs of painful gum disease.

Take your cat to the vet at least once a year to have her mouth checked as part of an overall health exam. Your vet may recommend she have her teeth cleaned under general anaesthetic (while asleep). Your vet may also suggest feeding her a special teeth-cleaning diet.

I spy with my little eye

Normally, cats have bright, clear eyes. Watch for redness, swelling or goopy discharge. Your cat could have an eye infection. Eye infections require treatment with medication from the vet.

Great groomers

Your cat's fur should be smooth, thick and shiny. Cats keep their coats in such great condition by grooming themselves every day with their bristly tongues. Lack of grooming is a sign your cat might not be feeling well. She may need to see the vet.

Brushing up

Brush your cat to help her remove loose hair. The less hair she ingests while licking herself, the fewer hairballs (balls of hair that collect in her stomach) she might throw up. Short-haired cats can be brushed a few times a week. Brush long-haired cats daily to help prevent mats.

Got shots?

Vaccines help protect cats against diseases that can make them very sick. Outdoor cats are more at risk of catching these diseases. Cats are usually vaccinated three times as kittens, then once every one to three years as adults. Your vet can recommend what vaccines your cat needs.



Do you hear what I hear?

Your cat's ears should be pale pink, clean and odourless. Beware ears that are red and swollen, smelly or filled with dark, waxy buildup! Take your cat to the vet to have them checked for infection.

Itchy ears could mean your cat has ear mites. Ear mites are tiny, eight-legged parasites that feed on the wax and oils in a cat's ear canal. Visit your vet for medication to treat the mite problem.



Kittens can have kittens!

Have your cat spayed or neutered before six months of age. Spaying and neutering are surgical operations performed by a vet to prevent animals from reproducing (having babies). That way, you can help prevent unwanted litters.

***Bonus!** Cats who are spayed or neutered are usually calmer, more content to stay home and less likely to get certain cancers.

Paw spa

To help keep your furniture – and you! – from getting scratched, have your cat's nails trimmed by an adult or your vet. Cutting them too short can be painful and cause them to bleed. Never have cats declawed.



Accidents happen?

Cats normally have excellent litter box habits. Should your cat urinate outside the litter box, take her to the vet for a health exam right away. Serious medical problems such as diabetes, kidney stones and bladder infections can all cause cats to have accidents in the house.

ID is key

In case she gets lost, your cat needs at least two forms of identification: a tag on her collar and an ear tattoo or a microchip. Use “quick-release” or “break-away” collars with built-in elastic to prevent your cat from getting tangled up.



Flea free

Is your cat scratching and chewing at her fur? She could have fleas! Fleas are small, wingless insects that feed on blood. The best flea control medications are available at your vet clinic.

Hookworms, roundworms and tapeworms, oh my!

Cats can carry worms that live, feed and reproduce inside them. Yikes! Common types include hookworms, roundworms and tapeworms. Worms can cause a variety of symptoms such as vomiting, diarrhea and weight loss. Luckily, medication for worms is easy to get from your vet.



Celebrate Cats!

Cats make wonderful companions. They are smart, affectionate, curious and entertaining. They keep us warm at night and always seem to know how to make us laugh.

Why not celebrate your friendship by taking time to read or play with your cat? You'll find some purrrfect suggestions below!



Pick of the litter-ature

There are many great cat books available online and at book stores, pet supply stores and public libraries. Here are just a few titles to get you started:

Cat Champions: Caring for our Feline Friends

By Rob Laidlaw

Think you're not old enough to make a difference? Read stories about kids your age who are helping homeless cats. Discover what it takes to rescue, foster, socialize and adopt cats and kittens.

Cats: 80 Fascinating Facts for Kids

By Anne Walker

Did you know that cats can locate the faintest sounds without even moving their heads? Enjoy learning all about cat senses and abilities, and then quiz your friends!



Choosing a Cat: How to Choose and Care for a Cat

By Laura S. Jeffrey

Should you get a kitten or an older cat? Should you adopt more than one cat? Bringing a cat (or two!) into your family is a big decision. Find out what you need to know to make them happy and healthy.

Paw-some playtime

Cats of all ages love to play! Here are some toys that are a hit with most cats:



Cat Dancer® Compleat

Cats love to bat at this dangly toy! You can play with your cat or mount the toy to a wall so she can play while you're away.



Cat Dancer® Cat Charmer

Wave this wand toy around and watch your cat become an acrobat!

PetSafe® SlimCat™ Interactive Feeder

Challenge your cat's hunting instincts with this food ball that drops kibble as it rolls.

Quality time on a dime

Luckily, you don't need a lot of money to have fun with your cat! You can make your own toys such as wands and puzzle feeders, too. Visit spca.bc.ca/crafts for ideas and instructions.

While spending some quality time together, grab a camera and capture your cat's silly side to share with friends and family. After all, who doesn't love a funny cat video?

The **5** Freedoms for Felines

Cats are often said to have nine lives. But we know, in reality, cats have only one life – and our job as guardians is to make sure they enjoy it!

We can give our cats the best life possible by providing them with the Five Freedoms. The Five Freedoms are a set of animal welfare guidelines used around the world. Each freedom describes a different part of the care required to meet an animal's needs. Taken together, the Five Freedoms show us how to be great cat guardians. 🐾

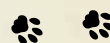
1 Freedom from hunger and thirst by giving cats the correct food and fresh water.

2 Freedom from pain, injury and disease by providing cats with regular veterinary care and a safe environment.

3 Freedom from distress by making sure cats are never neglected or abused, and do not feel scared, anxious, frustrated or depressed.

4 Freedom from discomfort by providing cats with a comfortable home that is warm, dry, clean and quiet.

5 Freedom to express behaviours that promote well-being by giving cats the chance to play, explore, groom, eat, drink and rest as they choose. 🐾



Remember, as guardians, we are responsible for our cats' health and well-being. And guess what? With all you have learned in this cat care guide, you are ready to begin providing the Five Freedoms to your cats today!