



ENRICHMENT: HELP YOUR CAT LIVE THEIR BEST LIFE AT HOME



By providing enrichment, you're giving your cat the chance to live their best life by enhancing an environment that already meets their fundamental needs.

The five pillars of a healthy feline environment:

1. Providing safe and quiet places to retreat to
2. Multiple and separated key environmental resources (food, litter, water)
3. Play and predatory behaviour
4. Positive and predictable human interactions
5. Respect for their senses (sight, hearing, touch, taste)

SENSORY ENRICHMENT

Make your home an exciting place for your cat by giving them lots of different things to see, smell, hear, taste and touch. Climbing onto high platforms is a normal feline behaviour and you can support this by providing climbing frames, cat towers and wall shelves. Doors with cat proof fly screens can be left open so that indoor cats can enjoy outdoor scents and sounds without escaping, unless there is a safe and enclosed outdoor area for them to access.

Cats love interacting with things that feel and sound interesting, like scratching pads covered in different types of carpet, toys with bells, catnip and cat friendly music to promote relaxation. Try 'Through a Cats Ear' on Spotify or Youtube.



SOCIAL ENRICHMENT

Just like people, some cats are more social than others. Your cat may be a social butterfly and enjoy interacting with you and other pets at home. Cats tend to prefer frequent interactions that are short in duration to give them a sense of choice and control. Types of interactions that restrict their ability to move freely can be unpleasant such as being held. What you might consider a light touch can feel very intense to a cat.

Get to know your cat and become familiar with cat body language so you can better understand what they are telling you. Maybe they prefer daily playtime or short training sessions.

Grooming sessions can be a wonderful way to bond with your cat, noting that cats are generally more comfortable being touched in some areas of their body than others.

Most importantly, follow your cats lead, let them initiate, choose and control the duration of interactions. Asking your cats consent before each and every interaction will let them know they can trust you.



THE CONSENT TEST



Step 1:
Wait until your cat comes to you.



Step 2:
Offer your hand and WAIT.



If your cat approaches, smells, or nudges you, try some pats or scratches for a couple of seconds. Return to Step 2 and repeat.



If they stay still or move away, STOP. Give them some space. Try again another time.

FEEDING ENRICHMENT

Whoever said “don’t play with your food” was wrong. Eating and drinking is fun! Instead of just using a bowl, consider using something simple like an egg carton and progress to more challenging feeders if appropriate.

If cats are showing signs of illness or stress to the point of it impacting their desire to eat, return to feeding in a bowl and seek advice from a behaviourist or veterinarian.

Some cats love drinking from water fountains made for pets, others love a dripping tap or mug. Offer your cat choices to see what they prefer.

PLAY

While play is not considered enrichment as it is a fundamental need for all cats, keep things interesting by mixing up the string toys that you use (these toys encourage stalking, chasing, pouncing and catching), puzzles (with food or toys inside - not the 1000 piece ones), and items they can play with on their own (empty cardboard boxes, scrunched up paper).



No one likes doing the same thing day in and day out, so rotate between different toys and pretty soon, your cat’s at-home lifestyle will be all fun and games!

Visit our website for more information, encouragement, inspiration, and to sign up to our community of cat lovers keeping their cats safe at home.

rspcansw.org.au/keeping-cats-safe