



PRESCRIPTION FOR YOUR CATS' HAPPINESS (MULTI CAT)

Dr. Nan Boss | Dr. Alex Ripperger | Dr. Paige Wilder

Pet cats retain many behaviors of their wild ancestor, *Felis lybica*, a solitary hunter of African and Arabian savannas and grasslands. As a small cat, they evolved as both predator and prey, and most feline behavior is designed to enable the cat to hunt safely (eating up to 10-20 small prey per day) and to protect itself (from other larger predators). As solitary hunters, they rely on watchfulness, familiar territory and routine to feel safe.



This need for a familiar and safe environment is critical for addressing your cats' behavioral and physical health problems; bladder disease, overgrooming, vomiting, and obesity can all result from stress. Below is the current plan to help fulfill your cat's needs in your home.

Safe Places

Key principles:

- A safe space is a private and secure area, often in a raised location. For cats with limited mobility, accommodations to reach higher locations should be made.
- Cats seek a sense of enclosure, isolation and/or seclusion.

1) Where can your cats go to avoid noises and/or unwanted human or animal interactions?

Room _____ Enclosed porch Closet Basement Other _____

2) What will separate your cats from a stressor?

Closed door Baby gate White noise High perch Stairs Other _____

3) While in their safe place, what can you provide for comfort and mental stimulation?

Lasting food toy Window Interesting scents High perch/bed Other _____



Caring People Helping Pets

2082 Cheyenne Court, Grafton, WI 53024 • phone: 262-375-0130 • fax: 262-375-4196 • www.bestfriendsvet.com



Play & Predatory Behavior

Key principle: Cats should be able to engage in predatory play and feeding behaviors.

1) How will you provide outlets for important hunting behaviors (searching, stalking, chasing, catching)?

Stuffed animals Electronic toy Laser toy Food puzzles Other _____

2) How often will you rotate your cats' toys? Daily Weekly Twice a month Monthly

3) Try to commit to playing with each of your cats for 3-5 minutes a day (cats are dawn & dusk hunters).

Examples: When I wake up After breakfast/dinner Before bedtime When I brush my teeth

4) Can you provide your cats with safe outdoor time?

Resource Locations

Key principles:

- Cats can very subtly guard resources for other cats by sitting and staring.
- Each of your cats should be able to reach key resources without having undesirable interactions with another cat/pet or human. This can be achieved by having a dedicated portion of the house for each cat or having one more of each resource than cats that live in the house (e.g. 3 cats = 4 litter boxes, 4 perches, 4 food areas).
- Each resource should be separated by a wall or meaningful space (e.g. litter boxes should be in separate rooms, and food and water separated by at least 3 feet of space or wall).

[] **Litterboxes are large, easy access, located in quiet locations.**

[] **Litter is soft to the touch (e.g. sand, clay, grass-based) and unscented.**

[] **Litterboxes will be scooped of soiled clumps at least once a day and litter completely changed**
Weekly Bi-monthly Monthly

[] **Resting places are available up high and semi-hidden, located:** _____

[] **Nail scratching posts/boards will be located** _____.

[] **Water will be located** _____ . As fountains?

[] **Food will be located** _____ . As interactive puzzles?

Appropriate Social Interactions

Key principles:

- Many cats prefer a high frequency, low intensity level of social contact with humans.
- Cats should be able to initiate, moderate and end their interactions with humans (and other pets).
- Cats need escape routes from young children.

How can your cat feel like s/he has the choice to interact with people and other pets?

[] All people understand my cats should consent to any touch by showing behaviors like approaching with tail raised, relaxed/almond-shaped eyes and slow blinking. My cats should not be picked up without these behaviors.

[] I will try to provide multiple entrances/exits from resting spots, litter boxes & other key resources.

Appreciating the Sensory World of Cats

Key principles:

- Cats rely heavily on their sense of smell.
- Cats feel threatened by strong smells and comforted by scents they deposit in their own environment.

1) What can you remove from your cat's space that is harsh or strong smelling?

Essential oils Scented litter Air freshener Strong cleaner Potpourri _____

2) What can you add to your cats' spaces that increases comforting smells?

Familiar bedding Pheromone products Rub new items w/ cat's scent _____

Subtle resource guarding / bullying



Feeding your cats together is stressful



Affiliative behavior – touching while sleeping



Non-affiliative behavior – not touching



Why Aren't My Cats Buddies?

- Cats do not have the same need for companionship as humans and dogs. They evolved as solitary hunters and survivors. As such, your cat does not *need* a feline friend.
- Some cats become friends, but a reasonable goal is for cats to be “amicable roommates”.
- **How to improve relationships between your cats:** Make sure each cat has full access to essential resources; prevent bullying by having one more of each resource than you have cats in your home.
- **This is hurting your cats' relationship:** Feeding them together. Cats find having another cat around their food threatening. Feed your cats in separate spaces.
- **If you want to get another cat:** Do it for you, not your cat. There's a higher chance your existing cat will be more stressed by the new cat than they would be if the remained a solo cat.

Cats that are more likely to get along are: related, grew up as kittens together, are less than 2 years old, are close in age, lived amicably with other cats in the past.