

10 Fundamental Needs of Cats

What do cats want and need? It's a question many owners may find themselves asking when they start to notice their furry friend is experiencing some behavior issues or anxiety. By meeting the needs below, you should have a well-adjusted cat. Note: It is important to acknowledge that many owners feel they are already meeting these things, but it may mean that they are not being presented in ways that fully meets the cat's true needs.

Need: To feel safe in their territory

Solution: Ensure your cat has a safe space to retreat to from visitors, other pets, and even you.

Need: Clean food and water

Solution: Ensure your cat always has access to fresh, clean water as well as nutritious food. Free feeding is fine, but scheduled feedings can make training your cat easier.

Need: Information primacy

Solution: Especially when they first come to your home, let your cat explore your home on their own time. Leaving them alone to check out their surroundings is important to establishing their confidence.

Need: The opportunity to make their own choices

Solution: Adjust furniture arrangements gradually, as cats like to know the routes and pathways they can take when they need to retreat to their safe space. Never force them to interact with you, visitors, or other pets in a specific way.

Need: The ability to release energy and stress

Solution: If something is stressing your cat out, work to remove the stressor or modify the environment to reduce their stress. Give them an option for an alternative outlet for releasing their energy and stress.

Need: To have comfortable elimination

Solution: Ensure your cat has easy access to a clean litterbox that is the appropriate size, location, and quantity for the number of cats in the household. Shape of the litterbox and the type of litter can also be important to your cat.

Need: Positive companionship

Solution: Work to build a positive relationship with your cat, and foster positive interactions between other humans and pets in the household.

Need: To complete the prey sequence

Solution: Buy or craft toys for your cat that fulfill their need to hunt and catch prey. Some toys may frustrate your cat because there is no "finish" to the game to mirror their natural instinct to catch their prey. Ensure they have a start and finish to play interactions.

Need: To relieve boredom

Solution: Make sure your cat has access to toys they can play with on their own, but also take time every day to engage in play with them. Give them a comfortable spot to watch out the window and consider getting a bird or squirrel feeder to hang outside to entice small animals to come past the window.

Need: To fulfill their mating instinct

Solution: Spay or neuter your cat before they mature to breeding age - which is a lot faster than you may think. Cats can be safely fixed once they are 2 months old and weigh 2 lbs.