

# FELINE ENRICHMENT

Providing your cat with mental and physical stimulation is critical for her behavioral health. A “boring” environment can contribute to behavior problems such as destruction, inter-cat aggression, depression, anxiety, overgrooming, retreating to isolation, overeating, obsessive/compulsive behaviors, loss of appetite and litterbox problems. By providing your cat with enrichment, you can help relieve that boredom and stress, which will make a major difference in her life.

## WHAT IS ENRICHMENT?

Enrichment is an ongoing process for providing positive and productive everyday life experiences for your cat. Enrichment encourages your cat’s natural behaviors by providing different experiences for her senses. Cats need daily opportunities to scratch, jump, hide, climb, perch, chase, stalk and play.

Daily enrichment doesn’t have to be a complicated, time-consuming or expensive event, however the more creative you get, the more fun you *and* your cat will have! Most enrichment items can be made from items you have laying around your house.

## ENVIRONMENT

Your cat’s environment should be a three-dimensional space, with both vertical and horizontal options for climbing, scratching, perching, jumping and hiding. Ideally, your cat should have enough vertical space that she can travel throughout the house without touching the floor.

## PLAY

Play is extremely important for cats as it reduces stress and frustration. Cats need both interactive and self-play opportunities. Provide multiple types of self-play toys for your cat and rotate them every other day to prevent boredom. Interactive play needs to occur daily – kittens should get at least four 15-minute play sessions a day and adult cats should get at least two 15-minute play sessions a day. Always end an interactive play session on a positive note by providing your cat with a yummy treat.

## SENSES

Cats need opportunities to use their five senses – sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch. One option that stimulates all five senses is an outdoor catio, which is a secure area where your cat can safely experience the outdoors.

- Sight – Place bird feeders near windows where your cat can see them, plant flowers that attract butterflies and birds, place perches near windows, blow bubbles or experiment with DVD’s made just for cats.
- Hearing – Open windows (with secure screens) so cats can hear the sounds of nature or use CD’s made just for cats.



- Smell – Catnip, silver vine, lemongrass or other cat-safe plant or herb or bring a pinecone or stick inside (make sure it's not been treated with chemicals).
- Taste – Use food puzzle toys to feed meals.
- Touch – Provide lots of surfaces at different heights for scratching and rubbing, a yoga mat or other mat for different texture or a running water fountain.

## **SOCIAL INTERACTION**

Although cats appear to be more independent than our doggie friends, they too benefit from social interaction with their human companions. Schedule time each day for a brushing/petting session, trick training session or agility session.



ARIZONA HUMANE SOCIETY