

How to Make Your Outdoor Cat a Happy Indoor Cat

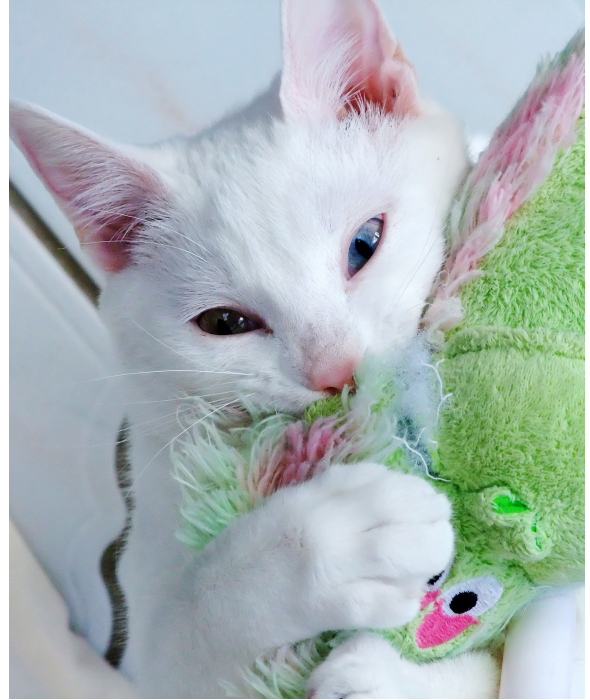
CATS INDOORS

Although it takes patience and time, an outdoor cat can become a perfectly content indoor pet. Some people transition their cat from outdoors to indoors gradually, bringing them inside for increasingly longer stays. Other people bring the cat in and shut the door for good. Either way, the key to success is to provide lots of attention and stimulation while the cat is indoors.

Your geographic location may affect the way you bring about this change; choose a good time of year to bring the cat indoors. In many parts of the country, the easiest time of year to make this conversion is during the cold winter months when your cat is more likely to want to be inside anyway. By the end of winter, your cat may be completely content to remain inside.

Substitute outside excursions with periods of special play time. Most cats need human companionship to be happy, and when they spend all their time out of doors, they get very little attention. An outdoor cat may welcome the indoors if he or she gets more love, attention, and play.

To keep your cat occupied indoors, provide areas that offer interesting places to lounge and play. You should also provide scratching posts, corrugated cardboard or sisal rope for your cat to scratch.



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To encourage your ex-outdoor cat to exercise, offer interesting toys, especially those that are interactive, such as a long pole with an attached line that has fabric or feathers at the end. Some cats enjoy searching for toys. If your cat likes to explore the house looking for “prey”, hide toys in various places so your cat can find them throughout the day.

If your cat remains stubbornly committed to life outdoors, help them adjust by providing an outdoor covered enclosure or run that the cat can access through a window or pet door. Such a facility gives the cat some of the advantages of being outside while minimizing the dangers. You can make the outdoor enclosure interesting and appealing by adding objects such as tree limbs, multilevel cat condos, tires, toys hanging from branches, and boxes in which the cat can curl up or hide.



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Check out the following products:

Cat Enclosure Kit: 1-888-554-PETS, or www.cdpets.com

Kitty Walk at www.midnightpass.com

SafeCat Outdoor Enclosure at: www.just4cats.com

If you cannot or prefer not to offer your cat a run or enclosure, consider leash-training your cat so you can supervise its time outside. Attach the leash to a harness. Your cat will likely resist leash-training at first, but most eventually accept it if gradually acclimated. Never leave your cat unsupervised while on a leash or lead. If you have just adopted a cat that stayed outdoors all the time, you should keep the cat inside from the beginning; otherwise, you run the risk of losing your cat. And don't forget to give your cat extra attention during the transition!

Additional tips for a happy indoor cat:

- ✓ Trim your cat's claws every one to two weeks to keep your cat from damaging furniture, rugs, and drapes, or glue on artificial nail caps called Soft Paws (available at www.softpaws.com) every six to eight weeks. Double-sided tape on furniture can also stop clawing. Do not declaw your cat.
- ✓ Provide one litter pan per cat and scoop the litter pan at least once daily. With non-clumping litter, change once or twice weekly; with clumping litter, change every two to four weeks.



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- ✓ Many cats enjoy the companionship of another cat or compatible dog of the opposite sex. If you can make the financial and emotional commitment, consider adopting another companion animal for yourself and for your cat.
- ✓ Provide your indoor cat with fresh greens. You can buy kits that include containers and seeds to grow, (see Cattail Gardens at www.cattailgardens.com) or plant pesticide-free alfalfa, grass, bird seed, or catnip in your own container. This way, your cat can graze safely and not destroy your house plants. If your cat won't graze or grazes so much that the plants die, consider dried catnip.

Adapted from, "All Cats Should Be Indoor Cats" by Rhonda Lucas Donald, *Shelter Sense*, August 1990, and "From Outdoors to Indoors" by Karen Commings, *Cat Fancy*, September 1993.