

6 Reasons Your Cat is Peeing Outside the Litter Box



Medical Issues

Health problems might be causing your cat to pee outside of the litter box. This behavior could be the result of a urinary tract infection, kidney disease, or diabetes. Other health problems that are painful or simply make your cat feel “off” could also be to blame. For example, an older cat with severe arthritis might have trouble getting into a box with high sides or a cover.



An Unclean Litter Box

To keep your litter box clean, it’s important to scoop the litter every day—or multiple times a day if you have multiple cats in your home. Refresh the litter and do a deep cleaning of the box every few weeks. Keep in mind that the feline sense of smell is much stronger than ours, so a box that seems “clean enough” to you might still smell disgusting to your cat. This is especially true in multiple cat households. Smelling your own waste is one thing, being forced into close proximity to someone else’s is an entirely different problem.



A Hard to Reach Litter Box

In addition to litter box cleanliness, the placement of the box could cause your cat to “go” elsewhere. A box that is in a basement can be a problem for an older cat that has trouble with stairs or her eyesight.

The box should be in a relatively active area of the house. While pet parents often don’t want a litter box in the living room, removing it too far from social areas may make the box hard to find or unappealing to your cat. Along the same lines, litter boxes that are next to machines that make loud noises or odd vibrations - such as the spin cycle of the washing machine - can be a “no go zone” for cats.

Try placing the box in a nearby hallway, bathroom, or office with easy access to a garbage can. The proper litter box set up will offer your cat privacy and peace and quiet, but still be easy for your cat to find.



The Type of Litter

Pet parents have a variety of litters to choose from, but not every type of litter will work for every cat. Some clay litters, or litters made from corncobs or recycled newspaper may not feel good on paws.

Kittens learn what type of litter they prefer from their mothers at about three weeks old. So using a different litter than the one that was used when your cat was a kitten, or deciding to switch the type of litter your cat is used to, could be at the root of litter problems. Pet parents may have to try a few different types of litters to find the one that works best for their cats.



Multiple Pets in the Home

Peeing outside the litter box happens more frequently in a household with multiple cats, particularly if one is a bully who prevents another cat from getting to the box. To address this, always have multiple litter boxes in your home and place them in multiple rooms.

If you have a timid cat in your home, be sure to devote a space and a litter box to her that other cats cannot access easily. You may also want to avoid covered litter boxes if you have multiple cats. Covered boxes may make some cats uneasy because they can’t see if another cat is coming in.



Stress and Anxiety

An anxious cat might pee elsewhere as a way to relieve her anxiety because the smell of her own urine makes her feel safer. Outdoor cats lingering in your yard may also cause stress for your cat—who might choose to pee near the front door as a possible response. Cats use a special type of urinary behavior (spraying) to mark their territories, which they will be more inclined to do when they feel stressed.