

Behavior & Training

Why Do Cats Like Boxes?



You order some fancy cat toys and your cat just wants to play with the shipping box. Sound familiar? Cats can't get enough of boxes — they love playing in them, sitting in them, and sleeping in them. Even big cats like tigers, lions and leopards go crazy for cardboard boxes. But why?

What's so great about a box?

- **It's the ultimate hideout.** Cats are hidiers by nature and enjoy cozy, enclosed spaces. Squishing themselves inside a box makes them feel safe and secure and lets them see without being seen. It can also be their coping mechanism for dealing with stress or anxiety.
- **It's a fitness center.** Boxes are full of fun. They let your cat get some exercise and scratch to their heart's content. (Your couch will thank you.)
- **It's a hunting spot.** Cats are hard-wired to hunt. A cardboard box is the ideal place for your cat to lie in wait for their "prey" (whether that's a laser pointer, feathers on a string, or a stuffed mouse).
- **It provides warmth.** Cardboard boxes can provide insulation for your cat, whose normal body temperature runs higher than humans.

Before giving your cat a box to play with, be sure to remove any plastic, Styrofoam, or any other packaging, as well as any staples, twist ties, or other fasteners that came on or in the box.

Fun with cardboard boxes

Want to up your cat's box game? Give some of these DIY projects a try.

- **Playhouse.** Check out this tutorial for making a two-story playhouse for your cat.

- **Room with a view.** Take a large cardboard box and cut a hole on one side (make sure it's big enough for your cat to go through). Cut a smaller hole on a different side to create a window for them to peek out. Place a soft blanket or towel inside. Your cat may never leave.
- **Maze.** Have some boxes piling up? Check out this video showing how one cat owner created his own cardboard maze, and this video to see the awesome "Rufus Tower." (Of course, your project doesn't have to be nearly as grand as either of these for your cat to be happy.)
- **Whack-a-mole.**
 - Take a not-too-small cardboard box and cut several holes (several inches around) on the top of the box.
 - Remove the flaps from one side of the box.
 - Place the box on the floor with the holes facing up.
 - Poke one of your cat's favorite plush toys through the holes at random. (A wand toy also works great for this.)
 - Watch your cat go bonkers, trying to whack the mole.

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