

# CREATIVE PET FURNITURE

*Furniture For Cat Lovers*



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## CAT CARE BASICS

By John Dow

When my kids came home begging me to get them a cat, I had no idea what to expect or how to care for a cat. Before I relented, I did some research and found out that there are some cat care basics with which I needed to be familiar before we would bring a cat into the home. We had to make decisions about food, litter, cat furniture, toys, fleas, grooming, and vet care. It was not a decision to be taken lightly, but it was one we decided to take on.

Here is some of the information I uncovered doing my research before we brought our new cat, Tommy, into our home.

Cats need a specific diet. Not all cat foods are good at meeting the natural dietary needs of cats. You would think that if a manufacturer says a food is good for cats, it has to be good for cats. But determining whether or not a food fits the dietary needs of your cat is up to you. The manufacturer is trying to sell his product, so do your homework.

Dry foods have different health benefits and drawbacks than canned foods. I didn't know that! Cats don't need a lot of vegetable fillers in their diet. I didn't know that either! Cats need a high-protein, high-animal fat diet. That sounded a bit off until I thought about it. Cats are carnivores in the truest sense of the word. They eat only other animals when they are in their natural habitat. Now I understand why I need to read labels and choose the diet that is best suited to Tommy's natural needs.

Another area I looked into was what toys are best for a cat. I saw a lot of really cool, colorful, texture-rich toys in the pet store. They would be great! Any cat would have so much fun with such a toy. Not so. Cats are not completely color blind, but they do not make much distinction in colors. A colorful toy has little influence on its attractiveness to a cat.

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I also thought a big ball of yarn would be fun until I found out that cats can ingest yarn and it embeds in the lining of their stomachs. That is not a scenario I wanted to know about personally! The cool crinkly toys I saw have had problems with the crinkly part coming out when the cat plays with it. Again, ingestion of the material can cause serious health risks. I had a lot of things to consider if I was going to have a cat and provide safe, fun toys for him to play with.

Do you know how many kinds of cat litter are on the market? Did you know some cats won't use certain types of litter? Some of them are very expensive, and others have a more reasonable price tag, but while some cats enjoy the more expensive, others will only use the cheapest kind of litter. I was getting quite tired just thinking about how many experiments we might have to do if we brought a cat home. How much clean up was I willing to do if the cat didn't like the litter I bought?

Cat furniture is another issue I researched. I know cats scratch, and I had heard that declawing is an unpleasant and unnecessary procedure. I wanted to know what my options were and how effective I could be in preserving my furniture and carpets. There is a large variety of options for furniture. There are textures cats prefer, along with structures that they enjoy. I learned that most important was to provide variety in any furniture I chose. I also learned that it is significantly cheaper (though requires an investment of time) to build my own.

Finally, I turned my thoughts to the physical health of a cat. I know worms can be a problem for a lot of cats. What I didn't know was how easy they are to treat if you are diligent about keeping up with the general health of the cat. I also learned that there are things you can do to make your cat's habitat less conducive to picking up worms. Cleanliness is important in the house as well as the yard!

And what about fleas? While fleas can be a problem, and they can cause some other health issues if they get out of control in a cat, they are also a minor problem if you are taking charge of your cat's overall health. There are many monthly-use products that keep fleas at bay just by being faithful to giving them to your cat.

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Ultimately, I learned a lot about taking care of a cat. My kids were asking me almost daily until I gave in and we brought Tommy home. I have been diligent about providing for his needs. He sees the vet on schedule. He has a healthy, protein-rich diet, he has toys that cannot hurt him, and we did finally find a litter he will use! He has quit scratching the furniture, and we are all enjoying having him in our home.

Be diligent in your research about cat care basics. If you will pay attention to your cat's needs, you will be able to avoid illness, injury, and outrageous vet bills!

Kelly is a frequent contributor to [www.freecathealthtips.com](http://www.freecathealthtips.com), a website that provides free information on cat care and cat health tips.

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