Location
Most people are inclined to place the litter box in an out-of-the-way spot in order to minimize odor and loose particles of cat litter in the house. Often, the litterbox ends up in the basement, sometimes next to an appliance and/or on a cold cement floor. This type of location can be undesirable from your cat’s point of view for several reasons. If you have a kitten or an older cat, she may not be able to get down a long flight of stairs in time to get to the litter box. Since she is new to the household, she may not remember where the litter box is if it’s located in an area she seldom frequents. Your cat may be startled while using the litter box if a furnace, washer or dryer suddenly comes on and that may be the last time she’ll risk such a frightening experience! If your cat likes to scratch the surface surrounding her litter box, she may find a cold cement floor unappealing. Therefore, you may have to compromise. The litterbox should be kept in a location that affords your cat some privacy, but is also conveniently located. If you place the litter box in a closet or a bathroom, be sure the door is wedged open from both sides, in order to prevent her from being trapped in or out. Depending on where it’s located, you might consider cutting a hole in a closet door and adding a swinging door. If the litter box sits on a smooth, slick or cold surface, put a small throw rug underneath the litter box.

## Type of LitterResearch has shown that most cats prefer fine-grained litters, presumably because they have a softer feel. The new scoopable litters usually have finer grains than the typical clay litter. However, high-quality, dust free, clay litters are relatively small-grained and may be perfectly acceptable to your cat. Potting soil also has a very soft texture, but is not very absorbent. If you suspect your cat has a history of spending time outdoors and is likely to eliminate in your houseplants, you can try mixing some potting soil with your regular litter. Once you find a litter your cat likes, don’t change types or brands. Buying the least expensive litter or whatever brand happens to be on sale, could result in your cat not using the litter box. Many cats are put off by the odor of scented or deodorant litters. For the same reason, it’s not a good idea to place a room deodorizer or air freshener near the litter box. A thin layer of baking soda placed on the bottom of the box will help absorb odors without repelling your cat. Odor shouldn’t be a problem if the litter box is kept clean. If you find the litter box odor offensive, your cat probably finds it even more offensive and won’t want to eliminate there.

## Number of LitterboxesYou should have at least as many litter boxes as you have cats. That way, none of them will ever be prevented from eliminating in the litterbox because it’s already occupied. You might also consider placing them in several locations around the house, so that no one cat can “guard” the litter box area and prevent the other cats from accessing it. We also recommend that you place at least one litter box on each level of your house. It’s not possible to designate a personal litter box for each cat in your household, as cats will use any litter box that’s available. Occasionally, a cat may refuse to use the litter box after another cat has used it. In this case, all of the litter boxes will need to be kept extremely clean and additional boxes may be needed.Cleaning The BoxTo meet the needs of the most discriminating cat, feces should be scooped out of the litter box daily. How often you change the litter depends on the number of cats you have, the number of litter boxes, and the type of litter you use. Twice a week is a general guideline for clay litter, but depending on the circumstances, you may need to change it every other day or once a week. If you scoop the litter daily, scoopable litter can go two to three weeks before the litter needs to be changed. If you notice an odor or if much of the litter is wet or clumped, it’s time for a change. Don’t use strong smelling chemicals or cleaning products when washing the litter box, as it may cause your cat to avoid it. Washing with soap and water should be sufficient.

## LinersSome cats don’t mind having a liner in the litterbox, while others do. Again, you may want to experiment to see if your cat is bothered by a liner in the box. If you do use a liner, make sure it’s anchored in place, so it can’t easily catch your cat’s claws or be pulled out of place.

## Depth Of LitterSome people think that the more litter they put in the box, the less often they will have to clean it. This is not true. Most cats won’t use litter that’s more than about two inches deep. In fact, some long-haired cats actually prefer less litter and a smooth, slick surface, such as the bottom of the litter box. The litterbox needs to be cleaned on a regular basis and adding extra litter is not a way around that chore.

## If Problems DevelopIf your cat begins to eliminate in areas other than the litter box, your first call should always be to your veterinarian. Many medical conditions can cause a change in a cat’s litter box habits. If your veterinarian determines that your cat is healthy, the cause may be behavioral. Most litter box behavior problems can be resolved by using behavior modification techniques. Punishment is not the answer. For long-standing or complex situations, contact an animal behavior specialist who has experience working with cats. Here are a few things you can try to address litter box problems:

* Do a test. Place numerous litter boxes around the house with different linings: newspaper, clumping litter, non-clumping litter, sand, sawdust, carpet remnants, and no litter at all. If you find that your cat prefers an unacceptable surface (such as carpet), try to slowly convert the cat back to a litter by adding a little litter each week. Continue adding more litter until you can remove the carpet remnants from the box.
* Clean soiled areas with an enzyme-based cleaner like Nature’s Miracle. Regular cleaners will not break down the urine/stool traces, so your cat may continue to use those spots. If the carpet or padding is saturated, it may need to be replaced.
* Try different depths of litter. If you routinely find excess clean litter on the floor beside the box, you’re probably using too much. Aim for around two inches.
* If the problem is only in one area, close the door to keep your cat out. If needed, confine your cat to a small, cat-proofed room with bedding, food, water, toys, and at least one litter box. Keep him there until you can be sure he is using his litter box, then gradually allow him access to other areas of the house.
* Feed your cat where he is urinating/defecating, because many cats will not do both in the same place.
* Use aluminum foil, upside-down carpet runners (with the plastic spikes on the bottom), or double-sided tape, to encourage your cat to avoid areas where he has eliminated before.
* Try Feliway or other pheromone products.