

# 6 Reasons You Might Let Your Cat Out, And Why Not To



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When I worked with the MSPCA in Boston, every day I'd hear from guilt-ridden pet parents about the awful things that happened to their cats when they went outside — they were hit by cars, attacked by predators, infected with diseases or they just disappeared.

But many people still let their cats outdoors — often with misplaced good intentions. Here are some of the most common reasons people let their cats outside, and safer, indoor alternatives.

## **Myth 1: Indoor cats get bored.**

**Fact:** The truth is, indoor cats can and do get bored, but letting them outside is not a good solution.

Instead, make your home more interesting: Set up perches where he can watch birds from the safety of inside, build a DIY cat playhouse, hide his food or modify his feeder so he has to “hunt” for it. (Find more suggestions in our environmental-enrichment series.) Finally, if your cat is amenable to it, you might consider adopting a second cat as a playmate.

## **Myth 2: Indoor cats are overweight.**

**Fact:** If your cat is overweight, the safest way to help her trim down is by combining portion control and a daily exercise and play routine.

Stop free-feeding your cat, or at least be mindful only to feed a healthy amount per day. (Yes, cats do overeat. You can consult your vet about how many calories your cat should be eating in a day.)

Have a cat who won't stand for an empty food dish? Keep him distracted with the activities mentioned above — the feeder toy would be perfect for him. If you feed wet food, try stuffing a smaller dog's toy (like a Kong) with the food so your cat will have to work to get the food out. You could also choose to use an automatic feeder like this one that works for wet or dry food, so you have options.

Cats love a schedule. Try feeding him at the same times each day and he'll get used to the routine quickly. (Just remember to consult your veterinarian before starting any new feeding or weight-loss routines.)

## **Myth 3: Indoor cats are destructive.**

**Fact:** Destructive behavior is often a sign that something else is going on. Is your cat sick? Bored? A talk with your vet or a behaviorist may be in order.

Solving the problem might be simpler than you think. For years my cat Mojo loved her sisal scratching post on the floor, but then she started scratching my couches as well. I kept trying to redirect her back to her sisal, but nothing worked. What did? Getting a second sisal post that I mounted vertically instead of horizontally. Turns out she wanted both, and my couches have been safe ever since.

## **Myth 4: My cat's always been allowed outside, so he can't be indoor-only.**

**Fact:** Many cats have successfully gone from outdoor-only or indoor/outdoor to indoor-only. The key, again, is making sure the indoor environment is just as interesting as outside — and being vigilant about preventing escape attempts. Read our article [Transitioning an Outdoor Cat to Indoors](#) for tips on how to do both.

## **Myth 5: My cat is safe when he goes outside because he stays close to my home.**

**Fact:** A study of 10 house cats and seven farm cats published in the European ecology journal *Ecography* found that on average, the house cats covered more ground than the farm cats — at night, the house cats moved within an average area of nearly 20 acres, compared to just over 6 acres for the farm cats.

A lot can happen even within a small radius of your home, so if you really want to let your cat outside, consider harness training him or creating a screened-in enclosure for him. Read our article [Should You Let Your Cat Go Outdoors?](#) to find out how to harness-train your cat and build a cat-safe outdoor enclosure.

## **Myth 6: I need to let my cat out of the house because I'm allergic to her.**

**Fact:** You may well be allergic to your cat, but it's possible you're really allergic to something she's bringing in:

Indoor/outdoor cats pick up fleas, ticks, pollen and other allergens from the environment.

If you really are allergic to your cat (an allergy test will tell you for sure), there are some easy ways you can reduce the allergens in your home — even when your cat is indoor-only. Find out more about living with cat allergies [here](#).