

IS IT BEST TO KEEP MY CAT INSIDE ALL THE TIME?

<https://www.jacksongalaxy.com/blogs/news/keeping-cats-indoors>

Cat Care guide 'Enriching your cat's life' saferehoming.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Enriching_your_cats_life.pdf

We strongly advise you to keep kittens indoors until they are at least 6 months old. If they are any younger they might not be able to cope with the challenges of the outside world because they are less robust and not 'street aware' which can prove dangerous or even fatal.

Do cats need to go outside? Is it cruel to keep them inside?

This depends on the cat and you. Cats are different depending on their age and personality. Some are happier curled up on the sofa but others want to dash out of the door to explore the yard & neighbourhood. **However that doesn't necessarily mean that's good for them. It's your responsibility to ensure your furry friend is as happy, healthy and safe as can be. Before deciding if it's cruel to keep them indoors all of the time you need to assess the risks and consequences.**

The argument FOR cats being allowed to roam freely outside. Some say....

- In order to be happy cats need to exhibit natural hunting and chasing behaviour
- Cats need to get out to benefit from fresh air and sunshine
- Going outside will keep their body and brain more active
- Cats are independent creatures and keeping them confined is cruel
- A cat that is free to come and go may be less likely to become bored or frustrated and this could mean there are fewer behavioural issues such as scratching furniture, urinating outside of the litter box or exhibiting aggressive behaviour
- You will have fewer litter boxes to clean



The argument AGAINST cats being allowed to roam freely outside. Some say....

- Free roaming cats don't live as long – some estimates say that on average their life expectancy is 2-5 years compared to an indoor cat which is 17 years
- They are at more risk of traffic related injuries and fatalities or sustaining an injury. Fights with cats, dogs or wild animals are common
- They can be exposed to diseases, parasites and bad weather
- They can be poisoned either through baits or accidentally from plants or other substances
- They may be stolen
- Some cats will kill wildlife
- There may be a council by-law which doesn't allow cats to free roam



IF YOU DECIDE TO LET YOUR CAT ROAM FREELY OUTSIDE

If you are going to let your cat roam freely outside you must accept the risks involved and take precautionary measures

- Your cat must be desexed, their vaccinations up to date and they must have been treated with preventatives. It's advisable that they are microchipped and registered under your name and that they have a collar with a tag containing your phone number In case of emergency or if they get lost. Depending on your council by-laws you may need to keep them inside at night.
- Before you let your cat out you should be confident that you have also established a strong feeding routine which includes calling your cat by name to be fed. From time to time call them back and reward them with a high value treat such as chicken so they start to associate you with nice things. You might want to take your cat outside on a harness at first and then let them out for only short supervised periods. The best time to train your cat is when they're hungry so when you call they come back for food.
- If your cat has been allowed access to the outdoors in a former home you may want to allow them out during the day. However because they are new to your area, you will need to re-introduce them gradually to your particular outdoor environment.



The argument FOR keeping cats indoors. Some say...

- You are protecting them from the significant risks outdoors
- They can live in comfort and safety
- They will be exposed to less parasites, diseases and poisons
- They will not be stolen
- They will live considerably longer
- They will not get into fights or other dangerous situations and will sustain fewer injuries
- They can still be totally happy especially if they have lots of enrichment



The argument AGAINST keeping your cat indoors. Some say...

- Some may develop into escape artists or constantly pester you to go out
- If not stimulated enough they can become real troublemakers. They can get bored or stressed and direct their energy into scratching furniture, chewing on wires or behaving aggressively
- If they don't get enough exercise they can become overweight and could suffer from diabetes and heart disease
- They may become dependent on you & suffer separation anxiety when you're not around
- You'll need to keep them away from toxic indoor plants and flowers
- If they escape they will not have much awareness of the outside

IF YOU DECIDE TO KEEP YOUR CAT INDOORS ALL THE TIME

If you keep your cat indoors you need to make sure you know how to keep them mentally and physically stimulated.

- Make the most use of your space both horizontally & vertically. Create cat highways at different levels or paths for them to jump onto shelves or different items of furniture to move around. Provide a sturdy scratching post so they can climb
- Keep the windows open but securely fastened with sturdy fly screens
- Provide them with somewhere to sit next to a window, preferably in the sun so they can watch birds and what's happening outside. Put a bird feeder or bird bath near the window to keep the birds and your cat safe
- Bring the outside in with cat friendly plants such as cat grass, cat mint and cat nip.
- Play with your cat several times a day to keep their mind and body stimulated
- Provide toys to stimulate them. Try different kinds of toys to find out which kind excites them most eg puzzle toys or toys they can chase. Swap them around frequently so they don't get bored.
- Hide treats around the house to encourage hunting behaviour
- Provide them with a companion cat to play with, sleep with and love



A COMPROMISE?

If you think you'd like your cat to enjoy the benefits of getting fresh air & exercise, the best compromise is to integrate the outdoors with the indoors by building a secure catio or enclosure



AND/OR training your cat to go for walks on a lead. Providing a catio is the best way to turn a cat that was previously allowed outdoors to transition.



SUMMARY – Is it cruel to keep cats indoors?

On balance cats don't need to go outside to be happy or healthy. Most cats, even if they have always been allowed outdoors previously can be perfectly happy living indoors as long as they get enough stimulation and enrichment. Cats adapt easily to being comfortable in a cosy home with lots to eat, a safe place to play and sleep and someone to love them!

This sheet is a general guide only and does not constitute professional or veterinary advice. SAFE Animal Rehoming does not accept responsibility for any circumstance which may arise from reliance of the information given but always acts in the best interest of the animals

**It is important to note that different organisations and vets hold different opinions*