

How Many Litter Boxes Do I Need?

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Who knew there was so much to kitty litter? [Dr. Justine Lee](#) provides some valuable litter box advice. For more from Dr. Lee, find her on [Facebook!](#)

While it seems trivial, an unclean litter box can result in serious behavioral and medical problems in cats such as:

- Urinating inappropriately around the house
- Spraying
- Defecating right outside the litter box
- Potentially predisposing to medical problems such as [feline urethral obstruction \(FUO\)](#) or [feline lower urinary tract disease \(FLUTD\)](#)

That's why veterinarians advocate getting $n+1$ litter boxes per cat. In other words, if you have $n=3$ cats, you need to have $n+1$, or four litter boxes. I have two cats, Seamus and Lily; thus, I have three litter boxes. While this may seem like overkill, remember that cats are affected by litter box husbandry and cleanliness, and you'd much rather have extra litter box cleaning duty than inappropriate urination in the house (e.g., peeing in your laundry basket, your plants, the basement, or on your down comforter).

Cats are very territorial and prefer not to share, so the more cats you have (or the less boxes you have), the higher the risk of urinary behavioral problems in your house. If you have cats that don't get along well, you may find one cat is too timid to go in a litter box (and hence, he or she is inappropriately urinating somewhere else).

The benefit of having extra litter boxes throughout the household is that you may find that each cat picks their own particular litter box. Since variety is the spice of life, why not be able to choose from multiple toilets? More importantly, know where and what type of kitty litter boxes to provide for your cat(s).

The next time you're in a pet store, take a look around – you'll be amazed at the variety of litter box choices you have available. You can purchase tall boxes, short boxes, small boxes, huge boxes, boxes with automatic scoopers, boxes of different shapes and colors, and covered and uncovered litter boxes. Most come with a lid, but not everyone chooses to use them. When in doubt, splurge a little – after all, litter boxes pretty much last a lifetime. Personally, I only tolerate covered litter boxes in my household. I like them because they help keep the kitty litter dust and smell in, prevent excessive kicking of litter onto the floor, and are more aesthetically friendly to houseguests.

One problem with a covered box is that, in a multicat household, the more submissive cat may feel "trapped" in a covered litter box by an approaching cat; as a result, she may be too timid to enter a covered litter box if she's feeling ganged up on. If your cats get along fine, try covered litter boxes, as it dramatically decreases the "dirtiness" of having a litter box around in your house. You may even notice that your friends come around to visit you more. If you're not sure, leave a few options out there for your cat: a few covered and uncovered litter boxes, a few different locations, and different types of litter to see what your cat prefers.

Who knew that there was so much to kitty litter?

If you have any questions or concerns, you should always visit or call your veterinarian – they are your best resource to ensure the health and well-being of your pets.