



Ideas to Get Your Cat Moving

By Andrea Vardaro Tucker, ELS

If you think your indoor cat is doomed to a life of inactivity, I'm happy to report that you have plenty of options; you might just need to get a little creative to encourage him to move.

Play Your Cat's Way to Better Health

Your cat will have so much fun, he won't even know he's getting a workout!

- **Have your cat chase a toy/laser pointer**, making sure you don't point it near anyone's—feline or human—eyes.
- **Use an interactive wand toy.** Most cats love jumping at and following poles with toys on the end.
- **Ask your cat to perform tricks** for low-calorie treats or praise. Clicker training can even work with cats.

Always monitor your cat's toy use, and avoid those with small parts, yarn, or string, which could be dangerous.

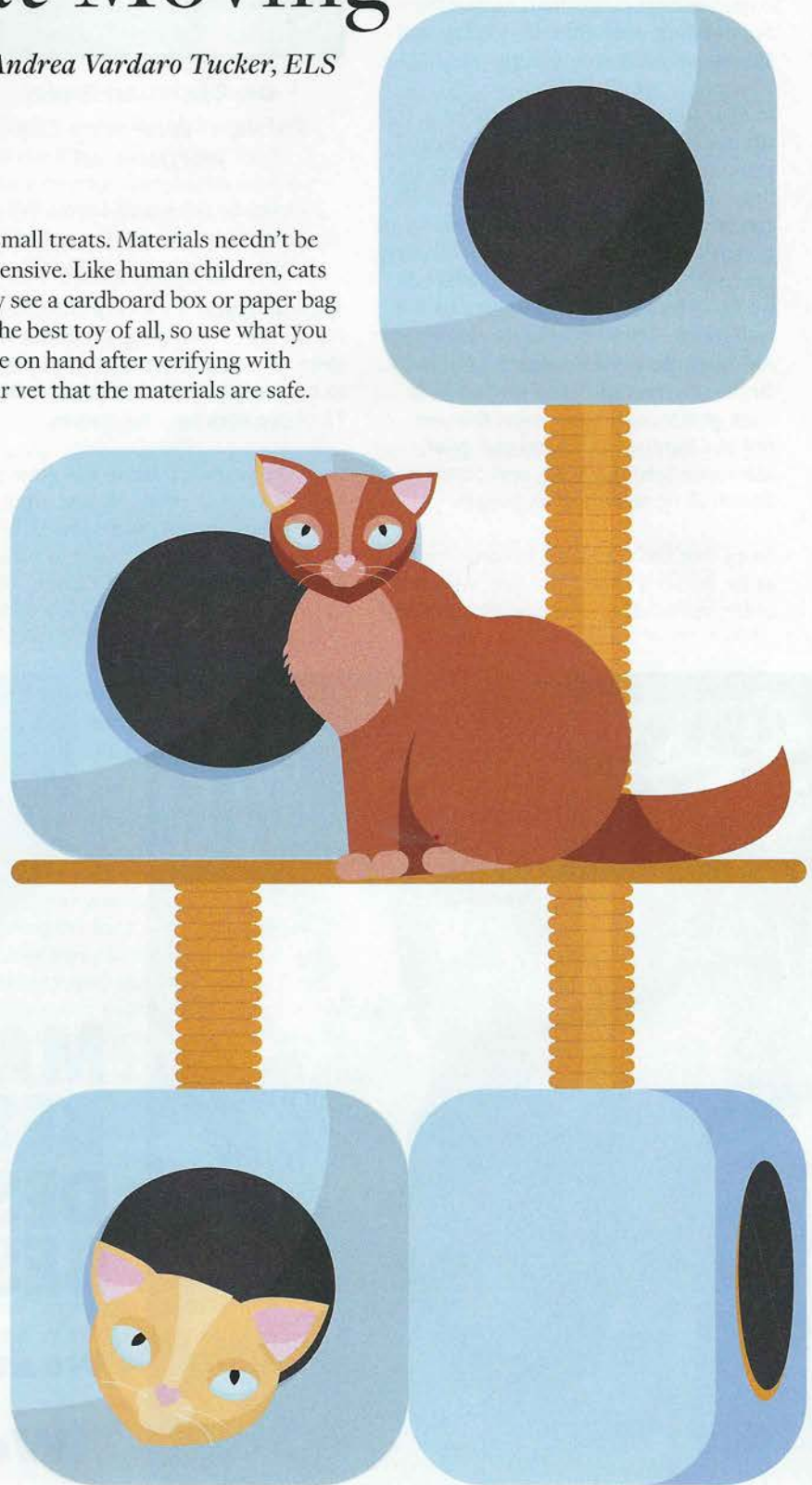
Didn't think cats could learn to do tricks? Most love the challenge.

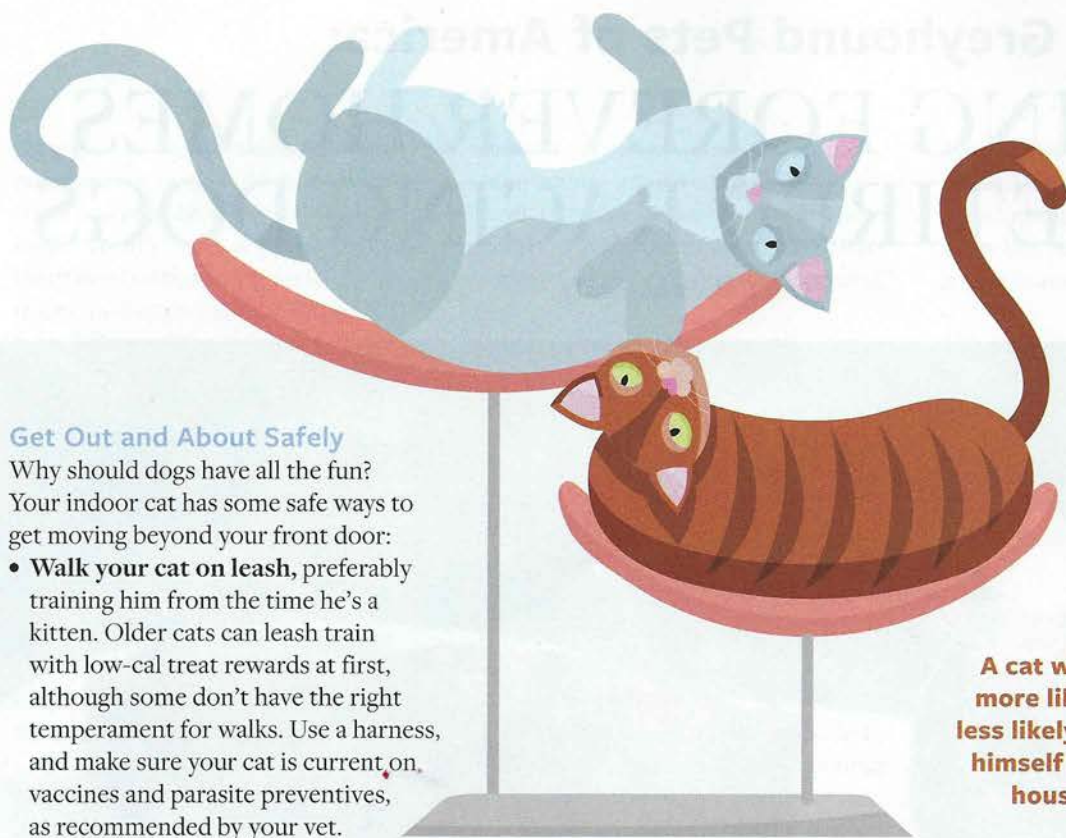
Transform Your Home

Chances are your cat climbs, jumps, and scratches his way around your house anyway. Encourage him to do so safely:

- **Add a cat tree or condo for your cat to climb**, ideally located near a secured window. If your cat's skeptical at first, encourage him to climb by running a wand toy up the tree.
- **Provide scratching posts or pads.** Your cat won't be able to resist getting a good workout stretching his muscles while using his claws.
- **Build an obstacle course** and guide your cat through it with a wand toy

or small treats. Materials needn't be expensive. Like human children, cats may see a cardboard box or paper bag as the best toy of all, so use what you have on hand after verifying with your vet that the materials are safe.





Get Out and About Safely

Why should dogs have all the fun? Your indoor cat has some safe ways to get moving beyond your front door:

- **Walk your cat on leash**, preferably training him from the time he's a kitten. Older cats can leash train with low-cal treat rewards at first, although some don't have the right temperament for walks. Use a harness, and make sure your cat is current on vaccines and parasite preventives, as recommended by your vet.
- **Encourage new friendships** between your cat and other cats, either through playdates or adoption of another cat.
- **Consider physical rehabilitation** for obese, injured, or arthritic pets.

Tap Into Your Cat's Instincts

Your cat's instinct is to stalk prey, then suddenly attack. So get the timing right. Cats do best with just a few minutes of activity at a time and often prefer a late-night or early-morning workout. You can:

- **Encourage your cat to hunt.** Moving toys that look like mice or birds can inspire a chase, and hiding bowls of your cat's food throughout your home will transform mealtime into a mode of exercise.

- **Introduce food puzzles**, which make your cat work to get his food out. They're a good alternative to hiding your cat's food if he has limited mobility. First encourage him to use the puzzle with his treats, then transition to all or some of his daily allotment of food. See page 7 for more advice on making mealtime fun for your pet.
- **Offer catnip**, always a great motivator for feline physical activity if your cat responds to it.

A cat who's well exercised is more likely to be content and less likely to find ways to amuse himself (potentially with your household belongings).

Check with your vet before starting any exercise program. Regular physical activity will help your cat get stronger, stay a healthy weight, and be less likely to experience diabetes, fatty liver, urinary tract issues, skin problems, osteoarthritis, and more. You might even help him live a longer, more enjoyable life.

