

# Cat Play-house

Cats need our help to live a long and happy life. Hundreds of cats are killed every year by cars and coyotes. It's perfectly justified to want to keep your cat safely indoors. But our feline friends need to go outside. It is in their nature! So, create a space where your cat can go outside safely at all hours of the day. Create a kitty playhouse.

Before you start, you need to decide where you want to put your cat house. It needs to be either beside or perpendicular to a window so that your cat(s) can get to and from the playhouse. You also need to decide how big you want it to be. I suggest a house about 4 feet by 3 feet long, with a yard about 4 feet long. Then, you need to gather your supplies. You will need several sheets of plywood, chicken wire, wooden posts, carpet or rope, paint, nails or staples, wood screws, two  $2\frac{1}{2}$  ft by 4 foot shelves, pre-made and painted 1 foot x 1 foot cubbyholes, a door and the means to attach it, and 1 foot diameter heavy duty pipe.

The first thing to do is to prime and paint or varnish both sides of all of the wood, which simplifies the process of building. Cut two pieces of plywood into  $2\frac{1}{2}$  x 7 foot pieces. These pieces will form the roof of the house. Screw them together at an angle, with the long sides together. Decide how tall you want your cathouse to be, (I suggest a  $6\frac{1}{2}$  feet) then cut four wooden posts to that length, and hammer them to the four bottom corners of the roof. Wrap the posts in carpet or rope from bottom to top.

Cut a piece of plywood into a  $6\frac{1}{2}$  by 4 foot sheet and hammer it to the side of two of the wooden posts. This will form the back wall of the "house". Then cut two sheets of plywood into  $6\frac{1}{2}$  by 3 foot rectangles. Hammer them onto the sides of the back wall facing each other, with them flat against the supports on one side. Take the two shelves and attach them to the back wall of the "house", one above the other. These will form the three floors of the house. Cut a piece of plywood so that it is able to entirely cover the area of space right below the bottom shelf completely. Then, cut a circular hole seven inches in diameter on one side of the piece of plywood, as a door for the cat(s). Screw the piece of plywood to the bottom shelf so that it creates a four walled room.



Attach a cubbyhole to the wall by the top, so that it creates a bottomless and topless box. This will create a comfortable bed for your cat. Using scrap wood, hammer together some tiny stairs that go from the ground to the top of the first shelf, and then proceed to the second shelf. Attach toys to the roof so that they hang down for your cat to play with. In the middle of the enclosure, hammer two cubbyholes together to form a tunnel.

Now you need to attach the door to one of the supports, and attach a post to the roof on the other side, so as to have a means to keep the door closed. Now, you need to attach the chicken wire so that it covers all of the possible places for your cat to get out of enclosure, and allow anything to get in.

Go inside the enclosure and saw a circular hole 1 foot in diameter in the side of the "house" that is facing a window that is part of *your* house. Measure how many feet it is to reach the window from the hole, and cut a piece of heavy duty piping to that length. Then attach the piece of piping to the hole in the inclosure on one side, and attach the other side to the bottom of the window frame, so that you can still close the window and block the passage from the cat house to yours. Block of the area of space that is not covered by the end of the pipe with the access chicken wire. Cover the floor of the enclosure with soft material. Wrap anything and everything possible with carpet. Lock the door of the enclosure, open the window, and let your cat(s) enjoy themselves!

# Elephants in the Zoo

These days, there are a lot of elephants in zoos. If you go to a zoo, you will most likely be able to see an elephant or two in an enclosure. You may think it's pretty cool to do this, but you are supporting a cause that is utterly horrendous.

Most of the elephants you see in captivity today were taken from their homes and families in the wild.

They often have illnesses, and have arthritis and foot problems at a young age, leading to them being euthanized years before their expected lifespan.

Elephants in the wild never have the kinds of illnesses and foot problems you see in captive

elephants. They have vast spaces to roam, socialize, and express their natural behavior. They live in herds and move around for 18 hours every day, foraging for



fresh food, bathing, playing, and walking as far as 30 miles in a day. In captivity, elephants are deprived of that friendship and the ability to do more than pace the floor of their enclosures.

The Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) care standards for elephants in captivity are woefully inadequate. For instance, even though elephants thrive in family herds, the AZA allows them to be kept in near-isolation. Zoos are only required to hold two or three female elephants, two males, or three of mixed gender, while in the wild, each herd consists of at least 10 cow elephants, an old bull, and numerous calfs. There is a complex social system unique to each herd, and elephants in captivity often were ripped away from that at a young age or have never experienced it.

For the sake of elephants in captivity, zoos must remove their elephant exhibits, releasing back into the wild the elephants with the ability to survive there, and strive to provide the elephants who are currently *in* captivity with a more humane existence.

# WINTER

Winter. The season of frigid weather, puffy jackets, and snow. The thing is, here in Newport Beach, we get none of that.

The only times I have ever seen snow has been when I traveled somewhere else. The question is, Why? Why is there no snow here, and why does it never really get cold?

First, you need to understand why there are different seasons. The seasons are caused by the tilt of the Earth's rotational axis away or toward the sun as it travels through its year-long path around the sun.

Newport beach is located about 2325 miles from the equator, and about 3905 miles from the north pole. That puts us about in the middle of the northern hemisphere. Nearer the equator it is warmer because it gets the most sun, and closer to the south pole it is colder because it gets almost no sun. Because we are close to the middle between the pole and the equator, we have a climate that is not too cold, and not too hot.

We don't have ever have to worry about blizzards, snow days, sweltering heat, or mosquitos. Our placement on the globe ROCKS! And to think it all is due to the tilt of the globe.

