

How Should Houseguests Look After My Cat?

CatChannel expert Jeanne Adlon, professional cat sitter, gives a checklist of do's and don'ts.

By Jeanne Adlon

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Q: A friend is staying in my apartment while I am on vacation. What instructions should I leave regarding my cat?

A: You must be very sure that your houseguest will care for your cat properly. If there is any doubt, please make arrangements for someone to come in and check. I remember a client asking me to look in on her cat Vincent while she was away. She had a houseguest staying in her apartment and it's a good thing she asked me to check.

When I did a house call three days after the guest's arrival I found the kitchen cabinets wide open and broken dishes strewn across the kitchen floor. I guess curiosity got the better of Vincent and as he jumped up, the dishes came down. I examined him thoroughly and, fortunately, he was none the worse for wear, so I vacuumed up the broken dishes and used a damp sponge on the floor to catch any slivers. Vincent's litter pan was also in a sorry state, so I cleaned it out and filled it with fresh litter. I left a note for the houseguest to please keep cabinet doors closed and clean the litter.

Always leave detailed instructions for anyone looking after your cat. This is especially true if they are not used to living with cats, and don't be afraid to state the obvious.

Here is a list I recommend to help houseguests and kitties get along:
Only open windows that have screens that are securely fastened
Pay attention when entering or leaving - many cats like to run out into a hallway
Check closets before closing doors
If using a pull-out couch, check underneath before closing
Secure all garbage and store outside or away from curious cats
All cat dishes should be cleaned daily and fresh water provided daily
Do not feed kitties table scraps. Provide cat treats instead
Litterboxes should be scooped daily
Mention all your kitties' hiding places
Leave a cat carrier in plain sight
Leave an emergency number where you can be reached and your vet's number

Good luck and remember, keeping your kitty safe and happy while you are vacationing is a matter of being careful and conscientious.