

Cats often appear relaxed, sophisticated and perfectly content, but stress may linger beneath their cool exteriors. According to animal behaviorists, certain factors can cause your cat to stress out, which may lead to behavioral problems. The factors that can cause your cat the most stress may be closer to home than you think. Behaviorists suggest introducing change slowly, especially when one of the following stressors is present:

Other cats. Keep an eye out for territorial behavior

Introduction of another animal such, as a dog, ferret or bird, to the household

New people, children or babies

A new or remodeled home

A significant change in your work schedule

Poor health, recent visits to the veterinarian's office or chronic medical conditions

Strong reprimands and physical punishment. Use positive reinforcement instead

Limited access to the litter box, food and water bowls or safe, comfortable sleeping areas

Loud noises from alarms; barking dogs; indoor appliances such as vacuum cleaners or central heating and cooling units.

---Theresa Meyers