



Bringing Your New Cat Home

Congratulations! You are the proud new owner of a cat. No doubt you're looking forward to years of happy companionship. But what do you do now?

Shop! You should have the following supplies when you bring your new cat home:

- Cat Carrier
- Premium cat or kitten food
- Food & water bowls – preferably metal or ceramic (sometimes get acne from plastic)
- Litter
- Litter pan (not too small) & scoop
- Bed
- Grooming brush
- Nail trimmers
- Breakaway collar with microchip ID in case cat gets outside
- Toys: feather wand, mice, balls, climbing post
- Cat furniture (to protect yours) –
- Cardboard scratcher – Cosmic Catnip Alpine Scratcher's are inexpensive and great.
- Scratching post a minimum of 28" tall with a large heavy base & a post that is either bare wood or wrapped in sisal or tightly woven carpet.

The first thing you should know about your new pet is that most cats hate to travel. After the ride home, he/she will most likely not be in the mood for fun. For the trip home, confine your pet in a sturdy cat carrier. Don't leave him loose in your car where he/she might panic and cause an accident.



1. *To make the transition into your household as comfortable as possible, your new kitty should spend at least its first few days in a room of its own that is away from main foot traffic. This can be any quiet room in your home – a bedroom or bathroom with a window is ideal. Place a litter box, bed, scratching post, and food and water dishes in this room. Bring in the carrier containing the new cat, CLOSE the door to the room, and open the carrier door. The cat should be allowed to come out of the carrier when it's ready – don't force it. Being in its own room will allow your cat to become accustomed to the sounds & smells in your home without the additional stress of confronting a complex physical environment.*
2. *When left alone, the cat may cry anxiously. You can comfort it by talking to it quietly, petting it gently, and if it doesn't seem too frightened, picking it up and holding it in your lap.*

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3. *It is especially important that children leave the cat alone during this time.* Introduce children gradually. Children's visits should be quiet & gentle so that the cat will learn to trust the entire family.
4. How soon you open the door to the new cat's private room depends on the cat and if you have other pets. Your new cat is ready to come out when it no longer acts fearful (running away from you, cowering or hiding).



If you have other cats –

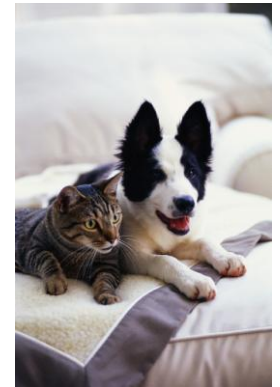
Start by allowing limited interaction under the door while the new cat is in its private room. Continue the gradual introduction by exchanging bedding between cats and gently rubbing a clean cloth around one cat's mouth and leaving that cloth in the other cat's space.

When all cats seem to be comfortable & curious about the exchanged bedding & cloths, short, supervised visits can begin. For the first formal introduction, have one cat in a carrier & allow the other cat to approach. Feeding both cats at the same time (separately) can reduce stress as well. Following this, allow cats to walk around and sniff each other. Continue to reward friendly behavior. Gradually increase the supervised time together.

Do not leave the cats together unsupervised until several supervised interactions without aggression have occurred. The process of introducing a new cat may take several weeks. Older cats may need a quiet space away from kittens for an extended period of time. Friendly, well-socialized cats may adapt to each other rapidly.

If you are introducing the cat to a home with a dog

Particularly a dog which has not previously lived with cats, **DO NOT** leave them together unsupervised, no matter how briefly. Dogs that are not aggressive have killed kittens unintentionally when the dogs attempted to play with the kitten. If you have a dog you should consult a dog trainer or dog training books on how to introduce cats.



5. **NEVER** force your cat out of its refuge before it is ready. If you attempt to do so, your cat will be even more fearful and distrustful of you.
6. General care of your new cat:



Give your cat the same type of *food* it was receiving in its foster home, at least at first. Sudden dietary changes can cause unpleasant digestive upsets. If you want to change foods, over several days gradually mix the new food with the old.

Your new cat will love a clean environment and clean body that matches its fastidious nature. Most cats prefer a fine-grained, unscented litter (clumping litter) that is about 1.5 inches deep, but preferences vary. Cats prefer boxes that are 1.5 times the length of their bodies. Boxes should be scooped 1 or 2 times daily and clumping litter should be completely changed at least weekly and more often for more than one cat. Wash litter box with warm, soapy water and dry well before adding new litter.

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The ideal number of litter boxes is one per cat, plus one. They should be placed in at least two different locations, & preferably more for multiple cat households. Locations should be private and have easy access. Do not place next to noisy appliances. Changes in a cat's environment, i.e., addition of a new family member, another pet, or even an occasional visitor on the patio from the cat next door, can cause your cat such distress that he could stop using his litter pan. Take a minute now to bookmark our Pet Tips web page at: www.animalplace.com/pet_tips for future reference.



Do NOT let your cat outdoors. Indoor-only cats live longer, healthier and less medically expensive lives. Be careful of open doors, cats can be quick and curious. See the article titled Keep Your Cat Safe at Home which is included in this packet.

You want to make sure that you are providing for your cat's safety and security. Protect your pets by making certain that all windows are securely screened, and that washer and dryer are kept closed and inspected before each use. Get in the habit of ensuring that drawers, closets and cupboards are uninhabited before you close them. Use extreme caution with folding beds, convertible sofas, drawers and reclining or swiveling chairs – cats may hide under or inside them and be injured or killed. Keep the lid of your toilet down. Kittens may fall in and drown. Curious cats & kittens can catch a leg or their neck on a dangling Venetian cord or hanging toy. If you have a balcony, do not let your cat or kitten on it unless it is enclosed. Cats have been injured or killed from falling off a balcony.

Some common home hazards to watch for are:

- Yarn, thread, string & rubber bands
- Cleaning fluids, rodent & bug killers
- Electrical cords – some cats will chew electrical cords, which can cause burns in the mouth, electrical shock or death
- Tinfoil, corks & cellophane
- Human medications
- Tobacco products, including nicotine gum & patches
- Liquid potpourri
- Plastic bags, aluminum foil
- Sharp objects like scissors, knives or pins
- Bells, buttons, and eyes on cat toys. Remove because they are a choking hazard.
- Anti-freeze

Since there is always a chance your feline friend may slip outside, be sure that you have current contact information on file for his microchip and that he is wearing a collar & tag.

Additional information on cat behavior and training can be found on our website www.animalplace.com/pet_tips

If you have a new kitten, here are a few extra tips

Vaccinations: Your kitten should have three kitten immunizations for distemper (called Calicivirus, Feline Rhinotracheitis and Panleukopenia), each three but no more than four weeks apart. You may want to give your kitten a two step booster shot for leukemia. Check with your vet about annual boosters. A rabies vaccination may be given at four months of age & is recommended for indoor only cats.

Manners: Don't let your kitten bite your hand, climb your leg or chew on your toes; what is cute when it's a kitten probably won't be when it's a grown cat. While learning the house rules, gently discourage unwanted behavior by saying no & offering a suitable alternative behavior to your kitten. Encourage your kitten to play on its own furniture – a scratching post – by dangling toys from the top of the post & sprinkling catnip at the base.

Urinating or defecating outside the litter box could be a sign of serious health or behavior problems. Contact your vet to rule out any medical problems. If your cat or kitten is in good health, work with your veterinarian to modify the behavior. Inappropriate urination issues CAN be successfully controlled by maintaining an immaculate litter pan and/or medication. Visit www.animalplace.com/pet_tips for more information specifically related to this common issue. Never force a kitten to remain in its litter box or scold it for failure to use the box. A kitten that associates its litter box with angry words or negative actions may avoid the litter box altogether.

Nutrition: Nutritious food and fresh water are vital to your kitten's health. Feed small portions because a kitten's stomach can not hold a lot of food at one time. For the first year of your kitten's life, feed only a quality "kitten only" food. We recommend

- Science Diet
- Wysong
- Royal Canin
- Nutro Max Cat

Always select a food that is low in ash & magnesium, especially for males which can develop serious kidney and bladder diseases from diets high in these two ingredients. Serve food at room temperature and never leave canned (wet) food out any longer than one hour. Dry food can be left out all day to allow the kitten to eat when hungry. Abruptly changing your kitten's food may cause diarrhea. If you want to change food, mix in the new food with the old & gradual increase the amount of the new food over a two week period.

A change in your kitten's eating habits is cause for concern. If a kitten stops eating or eats less than normal, the kitten is not being picky, something is wrong. Try feeding Gerber's baby food, turkey or chicken. If the kitten does not eat this, take it to your vet.

Diarrhea is another cause for immediate concern. If your kitten is not eating and/or has diarrhea, get the kitten to the vet immediately, and take a stool sample with you.

Toys: Select safe toys, such as wooden spools, paper bags (no plastic), an old shoe box or Kleenex box, boxes to climb in & under and newspaper to play in (especially a waded paper 'ball'). Commercial toy mice, feather toys and balls are also favorites, just watch for small parts that may come loose & be a choking hazard.