



Welcoming Home a New Cat

Congratulations on your new furry family member! This handout goes over some basic info about bringing a new cat into your home, but if you're looking for information on a specific behavior concern, please check out our website or reach out to our adoption team!

Adjustment period:

First, the most important thing you can do for your new feline friend is to allow it appropriate time to adjust to their new home. Your new pet has been through a lot of changes in the past few weeks, and it's going to take a little time for them to settle in and get comfortable. A few things help speed that process along a bit:

1) Provide them a separate, small, and quiet space. This helps for a couple of reasons:

- a. Some cats may hide while they're getting comfortable, and giving them places to do so will help them feel safe. You also want to monitor their health and know where they are, so limiting the number of places ensures that you know they're safe as they get comfy.
- b. Some cats may get overwhelmed if they have access to your whole space all at once.

Even a bathroom can be a good spot for them as long as everything they need fits in there!

Things that can help a cat feel safe in their space:

- Put their food, water, and litter in the space.
- Plenty of soft bed options like blankets, towels, and cat beds that you can then use to help them adjust to the rest of their new home
- Places to hide (even something as simple as a cardboard box!)
- Access to vertical space like a window sill, shelf, or cat tree. Cats often like to be high up to feel safe and observe the space.
- Feliway or lavender scent to help them relax.

2) Spend time with them, but respect their boundaries.

Sit in the space where they're hanging out and let them come to you. If they ask for attention, great! If they just want to watch from a distance until they're more comfortable, that's fine, too. If you push them past their comfort zone, they might regress even further or use their claws or teeth to enforce their boundaries, so take it slow. Reward social behaviors with a treat they like. Go at their pace. That might mean it takes days or even weeks to get settled. This is normal, and every cat is different.

3) Expand the areas they can access slowly and only once they're showing more relaxed behaviors.

This includes new people in addition to the rest of their new space, so hold off on that welcome home party until they're fully settled. Use items from their initial adjustment space as tools to help them adjust to bigger, newer spaces. New places will feel less overwhelming if they contain familiar things.

Some other things to help get your kitty settled in:

Food:

Ask the adoption counselor or foster parent what food your new cat has been eating. If you would like to change to a different food, do it slowly over the course of a week so you don't upset your new cat's digestion.

Litter:

Make sure the cat always has access to their litter box and that they know where it is. You can do this by putting them in it whenever you move it to a new space, and if you do move their litter box, do it slowly. There are tons of options for types of litter boxes, and every cat will have slightly different preferences, though most prefer unscented, low-dust clumping litter. If you are noticing litter box issues, change the type of box and the type of litter after ruling out medical causes. The biggest reason cats choose not to use their litter box is that it's not clean, so remember to scoop it regularly (at least once a day) and clean it regularly, too!

Toys:

Playtime is an important part of any pet's daily life, and a good toy really helps with that! We encourage wand play as it

simulates their natural predatory experience, kicker toys for the same reason, and catnip as parts of your feline's enrichment routine. There are tons of other



interesting, interactive toys out there to match your cat's preferred play style, but you don't need to spend a lot of money on toys to keep your cat entertained. Crumpled up paper, bottle caps, or even socks can be a cat's favorite toys.

Plenty of Treats:

Treats allow you to communicate with our cats through "positive reinforcement." Any time your cat does something you like, reward them with a treat so they're more likely to do it. Make sure to find a treat they really like (which can take some trial and error) so the treat really is a reward.

New Cat Checklist

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|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dry food | <input type="checkbox"/> Bed or bedding |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Wet food | <input type="checkbox"/> Toys including a wand |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Food bowl | <input type="checkbox"/> Carrier |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Water bowl or fountain | <input type="checkbox"/> Scratching pads and posts |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Litter box | <input type="checkbox"/> Brush |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Litter | <input type="checkbox"/> Pet nail trimmers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Treats | <input type="checkbox"/> Flea preventative |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Safety collar and identification tag | |