

Bringing Your New Cat Home

Congratulations on finding your new best friend! Here are some tips to help guide you through the first few days after bringing your new cat home!

It's important to remember that your new cat could be frightened and confused, even if they were happy and outgoing when you met them at the shelter. Cats like routine and to have control over their environment, so it may take them a few days to feel the safety and comfort that they felt in the den they had created for themselves at the shelter.

For these reasons, we suggest that you set up a bedroom or bathroom for your new friend and give them a smaller space to acclimate to before they are given full access to your home. This should be a quiet spot, where there isn't a lot of traffic and you can close the door to be sure they're safe inside their room.

There are a few things you should include when setting this room up:

- Fresh water, dry food and some wet food. Giving them some wet food as a tempting treat in the beginning will help them begin to trust you and feel safer right from the start. It's also important to remember that some cats can become frightened and may not want to eat at first, so offering something tempting like a wet food treat could help ease that situation.
- A large litter box. Make sure you offer a large litter box in a prominent and easy to find spot, using the type of litter that was used at the shelter. If you plan to switch litter, you'll want to do so slowly, in increments, so that your adopted cat can get used to the texture of the new litter. Don't put the litter box in a high traffic or noisy area, as you want him to feel as safe as possible when using the litter box.
- A variety of beds, blankets and cozy hiding spots. Many cats will want to hide initially in their new home, and offering them safe, warm places to do so will allow them to feel comfortable in a quiet space that's warm and soft. Most cats really enjoy warm and cozy things to lie on.
- A variety of toys. The best way to find out what kind of toys your cat likes is to offer a variety and see which ones they respond to! He may not feel a lot like playing at first, but as he settles in and feels more safe, you may see his playful side and it's good to know which toys make him happiest!
- A vertical space for them to climb on. Investing in a cat tree is a wonderful idea as they can be moved around the house as you give your cat more access to the home, and many cats need to have a taller vantage point to both feel safe and have control of their space. Some just need the vertical space to help them burn off playful energy.
- If the room you've chosen has tile or wood floors, putting rugs down will be important as many cats prefer to walk on soft surfaces and although your cat will most likely be fine with a harder surface with some time, when you're first starting out, rugs are a good choice.

What to do when you first arrive home and in the days that follow:

- When first arriving home, set the box or carrier that your cat came home in down in the room you've set up for him. Open the carrier and let him come out on his own. Don't try to pick him up or remove him from the carrier; just let him come out when he's ready.
- Let him explore on his own for a while. He may be curious and smelling things, or he may be shy and run to hide under the bed or in the cat tent you've purchased for him. Either reaction is normal! What's most important is that you just spend some quiet time in the room with him during these first few moments. Let him do what feels best for him and don't try to pet him just yet. Talk to him and let him explore his new world.
- If he's the kind of cat who's out and about, exploring and possibly playing or interested in his food bowl, go ahead and pet him gently on his face and cheeks. Get to know him a little without invading his space. He's still learning you, and you're getting to know his body language and his personality. Never try to pick him up in those first few days, he may not know you well enough yet, and he may become upset by this.
- If he's the kind of cat who went into hiding upon leaving his carrier, just let him find a safe place to hide and don't try to pull him out of that spot. Put his food and water nearby and spend some time talking gently to him. Offer him treats, this will begin to create a bond of trust between he and his new family. Eventually he'll begin to feel safe and venture out to explore the rest of his world.
- During the time he's in his room, make sure he gets to meet the other family members and that everyone's spending time with him, getting to know him. If there are children in the home, introduce them slowly and quietly, one at a time. Once you know how your cat will react, you can begin to let the kids spend more time with him, always supervised. If he's playful and outgoing, encourage the kids to play with him with appropriate toys. If he's shy, the introduction needs to be a bit slower and with more care, but it's still important that he get to know the sounds of the voices in the house and to know that those people will give him treats and food.

Every cat is a little different when they first come home. Some cats are gregarious and ready to go, while others are shy and need more time to get to know their family before they can show their real personality. Some cats only need a week in their room, while others can take a little longer. What's most important is that he be out and about in his room, happy and feeling safe when he's introduced to the rest of the home. If he's hiding and given access to a bigger space to hide in, it may be difficult for him settle in and he could become lost in your home. In any case, take the introduction to their new space slowly; when you first let them out make sure you're supervising and making sure he's not going back into hiding or that he's not getting into trouble in his new, bigger world. Always keep an eye on children and new pets, and all introductions to other pets need to be handled in a special manner. Supervision during these first days out of the room are going to be key to making sure he's safe and confident in his new home. It's perfectly fine to put him back in his acclimation room at night, if he's still not entirely brave about the entire home. With these tips in mind, introducing your new cat to his home can be rewarding and fun. With a little patience and lots of love, the newest family member will become the best companion you can find!