

Introducing a New Cat To Your Home



The first step to introducing a new cat or kitten to your home is to put yourself “in their paws”. They have often recently had some very scary experiences: a stay at the vet, spay or neuter surgery, a trip in the car and lots of new people petting them, new food, new smells, new cats, etc. It’s no wonder that going to a new home can be scary to a new cat or kitten. The following are some hints that will help you help your new pet make the transition to your home. If you do these things it will make the transition easier for your cat and you!

The First Steps

As soon as you get home, put your new kitten in a kitten-proofed room where she cannot hide. A good choice is a large bathroom, or spare bedroom/home office that does not have the traditional bed on a frame. It should be a heated place where you will want to spend time with the kitten. A bad choice is a bedroom with lots of hiding places (such as under the bed, closet, etc.) or a laundry room where she can hide behind the washer and dryer. Put the food, water and litter box and a soft blanket or cat bed in the room. As you get the kitten out of the carrier, show her these things. Later, when your kitten is comfortable with your house, you may move her food and litter box and bed to another place.

Spend as much time in the room with your kitten as you can, but don’t overwhelm her. Sit on the floor and play with her. Let her come to you. You may offer her small amounts of canned food to encourage her to come to you.

When the kitten knows you and runs to greet you at the door, it is time to let her explore the rest of the house with your guidance. (This could take 1-2 weeks. BE PATIENT!) If there are other pets in the house, especially a frisky dog, it will be better to keep the other pets away initially. Walk around the house with your kitten until she feels comfortable. Continue to use the “safe room” when you are gone or when the other pets are in the house. Gradually your kitten will become used to you and the rest of the household and she will not need to use her “safe room”.

Try to feed her the same kind of dry food that she has been eating (PAWS kittens usually are fed EVOLVE kitten, PAWS Adults eat Evolve or Natural Balance Cat Food).

THINGS TO AVOID

When you first bring your cat home do not bring all your friends and neighbors in to see her. This will be too overwhelming to her. When your cat is comfortable with you, you may invite friends over to meet her.

Try not to chase or pursue your cat. This will reinforce the negative learning she may have acquired about humans. You want to teach her that you are gentle and patient. Try to get her to come to you by playing with or feeding her. Sitting on the floor or sofa with her is reassuring.

Don't leave canned food in the room without her coming out to see you. Save this treat for when she comes to you. Pet her and softly praise her when she comes out and starts to eat the treat. You should leave a small bowl of dry food and, always, a bowl water for her when you are not in the room.

Avoid loud, startling noises when your cat first is getting to know you and starts to explore the house.

Avoid letting your dog chase her. It is a good idea to crate or leash your dog while making introductions to your new family member. It is especially important to have a litterbox location that is not accessible to the dog, there is nothing more disconcerting to a cat than to be interrupted in the litterbox by a nosy dog.

If your cat is hand shy you must teach her that your hand is good. Never use your hand to punish. Only use it for petting or feeding. Use pennies in a pop can or another noisy distraction for discipline. If your cat plays with your hand inappropriately, simply remove your hand and substitute a toy. Or end the play session. You do not want your cat to use your hand as a plaything.

Don't change her food abruptly. To change foods, mix the new food in with the present food gradually over the course of a week. This will minimize food strikes and stomach upsets.

Checklist for a new cat

- Litterbox: plan on one for each cat in the household.
- Food and water bowl: initially each cat should have their own, many cats will share once they know each other.
- Bed: cats like a snug place to curl up- a cardboard box with a soft towel, or a fleece cat bed will do.
- Scratching post: cardboard, carpet, sisal or wood are all good surfaces- training your new cat to use a post will save your furniture.
- Soft cat brush: brushing your cat regularly is a good habit to develop — it cuts down on shedding in your house, allows you to keep close check of your cats skin condition and strengthens the bond between you and your cat.
- Dry and canned food: try to match what your cat was eating — if you want to switch brands to so slowly to avoid stomach upset.
- Toys: cats like to play: toys will keep your cat from getting bored and out of shape.