

Your New Cat

We are so excited that you decided to adopt your new cat! We want this to be a positive experience so that you and your new cat can live happily together for a long time. Here are some tips for starting your new relationship off on the right “paw.”

First Day Home

We know you have just committed to a new family member, and this can be stressful and exciting for all involved, including your new cat. When bringing your cat home for the first time, keep in mind that he has probably been through a lot in the last few days. He may have been lost on the streets for a period of time before coming to the shelter or given up by his previous owner. Being adopted into a new family can be very overwhelming for a cat.

Your first day with your new cat should be spent allowing him to get used to his new home. Establishing a sanctuary room for your cat will help him adjust well into your home. Cats are territorial animals and do best being introduced to one part of a new home at a time. Pick a quiet room that your new cat can be in until he has adjusted. This room should have food, water, a litter box, a scratcher, and some toys.

The Weeks That Follow

Visit your cat regularly as he adjusts to his room. Everything he encounters will be new and possibly stressful for him, so it is important to allow him to adjust at his own pace. It could take two days for him to be his normal self, or it could take two months. There is no set time limit on this adjustment period because every cat is different. A good indication that your cat has adjusted to his new home is when your cat is eating, drinking, and using the litter box normally. Your cat should also not show any signs of fear, such as hiding when you walk into the sanctuary room. When your cat is ready to see the rest of the house, simply open the door and allow your cat to explore on his own.

We strongly encourage you to take advantage of the “free 1st exam” list of veterinarians we provided you with your adoption. However, be aware that a veterinary clinic is a stressful environment for any cat, and do everything you can to make it a positive experience for him, like bringing treats with you or using a calming spray like Feliway (see our “Stress Relief” handout).

Introductions

If you have other pets at home, take your time introducing your new cat to them. Rushing through an introduction can cause long lasting conflicts between your new cat and your current pets. See our handout “Introducing Your New Cat to Your Resident Cat” on our website. Other animals, like dogs, take a little bit longer to get used to having a new cat in their home. See our handout “Introducing Your New Cat to Your Other Pets.”

Training

Training is an important thing that should begin early, no matter what age your new cat is. Socializing kittens is crucial to their development and will help you have a well-rounded cat as an adult. Talking to, touching, and playing with your cat all lead to a more socialized pet. For all cats, we recommend clicker training (see our “Cat Clicker Training” handout online). This is a great form of positive-reinforcement training that can help teach your cat manners, help a fearful cat become more confident, and is also a great stress reliever.