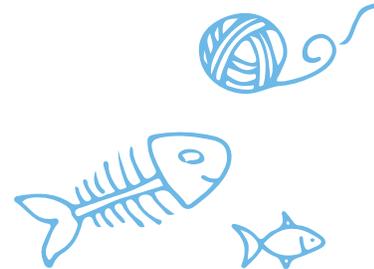


Cat 101

Welcome Home, Kitty

Bringing a cat into your life is an exciting experience. Make your new friend feel right at home with these tips.



Personal Space

Did you know that studies have shown it can take an adult cat up to eight months to fully integrate into a new home, especially when factors such as children or other pets are present? Be patient and provide your new cat with a lot of affection and physical contact.

tip

Provide personal space for your new cat when you bring him home. This space allows your cat to adjust to his new environment at his own pace.

As your new cat demonstrates comfort in his new environment, introduce him to all areas of your home.

Preparation & Supplies

First, prepare to welcome your cat home by making sure you have these items on hand:

- Food, water bowls, and treats (To ease the transition, stick with the food your cat is used to eating at first. Then, if necessary, gradually switch to a different food.)
- Collar with ID tag
- Cat bed, cat toys, and a cat brush
- Cat litter box and litter (Again, stick with the type the cat is used to.)
- Scratching post or strips (Cats relieve stress by scratching.)

Your Cat's Environment

Many cats are fearful when introduced to their new home; being moved from a small enclosure to an apartment or house is a big change. Your home also has different smells and noises than the shelter and the home where your cat lived before. Initially, confine your new cat to one room. Your bedroom or the living room often works well. Make sure that you provide your new cat with food, water, and a litter box (see below), and that you regularly spend time in this room with him so that he is not alone.

Provide him with multiple hiding places. A cardboard box with holes cut in both sides (so he can go in and out each side) and a blanket placed in the bottom can be a great hiding place. Be certain to provide your cat with hiding places on the ground, as well as up high. When he is in his hiding place, do not disturb him. His hiding place should be a special spot where he can have privacy if desired.

Place a scratching post or cat tree in his room. Place his scent on the cat tree by gently stroking his cheeks with a towel, and then rubbing the scratching post with the towel. This will transfer the cat's scent onto the scratching post, increasing the likelihood that he will use it.

Let your cat adjust to the room, and to you. Do not force him to stay near you. Instead, coax him to you by playing with an interactive toy or staying near his food bowl while he is eating. Once he realizes that this stranger (you) provides all the same good things that his previous owner did (and maybe even more!), he will warm quickly to you and accept your attention.

Feline Diet

Cats eat less when they are stressed, and sometimes they stop eating altogether. It is extremely important to make sure that your cat is eating regularly (and adequate amounts) once you have brought him home. If possible, buy the same type of food that the shelter used. If he is not eating, try mixing a little bit of a tastier food like canned cat food or baby food into his meal. If you decide to switch your cat to a new food, mix that in with the current diet in small amounts and gradually transition entirely to the new food over a one-week period of time.

Decide whether you wish to feed your cat once daily, twice daily, or free choice, meaning leaving dry food out at all times. Many cats who are fed free choice do not properly control their food intake and tend to be overweight which predisposes them to health problems. For most cats, twice daily feeding is ideal. You can also put some of your cat's daily ration into a food-dispensing toy. Food-dispensing toys are a fun way for your cat to "hunt" for his food, and are a great way to enrich his life. Don't use a food-dispensing toy until your cat has completely settled into your home, usually two to three weeks.

Litter Box

Provide your cat with an uncovered, clean litter box. Covered litter boxes can trap odors inside the box, which is nice for you but not for your cat. Cats are often quite fastidious; they are sensitive to the smell of urine and feces, as well as deodorizers. Reducing the smell inside and around the litter box can be very important for them. Scoop out the litter box once daily, and empty it completely to clean it every two weeks. When you clean the litter box, use a mild soap instead of strong-smelling detergents or ammonia.

Cat Toys

There are many different toys that your cat might like to play with. Cats like novelty, so buy several different types of toys and try them out. Play with the toys with your cat; don't expect him to play with them on his own. If he is not interested in them for the first few days, give him time, and try different toys. Do not play with your cat with your hands. Using your hands as a toy teaches your cat that it is okay to bite or scratch you.

Indoors vs. Outdoors

One of the big decisions cat owners must make is whether to allow their cat outside. There are many risks outdoors that can shorten your cat's lifespan. He could be hit by a car, poisoned, attacked by a dog, or infected with an incurable virus. To provide the experience of the natural world, you could consider leash training your cat, having an enclosed outdoor area, or getting a window perch. All of these provide environmental stimulation without the risks involved for roaming cats.

