



Tips for the First 30 Days of Cat Adoption

“Be prepared” should be your mantra when bringing a new pet into your home. Cats are particularly sensitive to new surroundings and some may hide under a bed or in a closet for days or even weeks. You can avoid pitfalls and help him or her adapt more easily by following these guidelines:

Before You Bring Your Cat Home:

- Cats are territorial and coming into a new home leaves them feeling uneasy. There’s all that unexplored space, and who knows what may lurk there. Do her a favor and provide a small area to call her own for the first few days or weeks. A bathroom or laundry room works well. Furnish the room with cat amenities, such as food, water and a litter box. You’ll want to spend time with your cat, so make sure there’s a comfortable place for you to sit as well.
- Fill a litter box with one or two inches of litter and place it in her room where she can use it undisturbed. After all, everyone deserves a modicum of privacy when pottyting!
- Set up a feeding station with food and water bowls. Locate it away from the litter box.
- Cats love to get away from it all in small places. If she came home in a cat carrier, you can use that. You can also make one by cutting a doorway in the end of a cardboard box, or simply buy a covered cat bed at a pet supply store. Whatever you choose, make sure the space is big enough for the cat to stand up and turn around in. Make sure she can see the door to the room, so she won’t be startled.
- A cat’s claws need to be worn down, and they do this by scratching on things. To save your furniture, provide your cat with a scratching place. Some are made of corrugated cardboard and lie on the floor; others are posts which should be tall enough so that the cat can reach up to scratch. Encourage your cat to use the post by sprinkling it with catnip or dangling a toy at the top. Use a scratching post in each room where there is soft furniture, perhaps blocking access to it. You can also apply sticky tape to the corners of upholstered furniture to dissuade scratching.
- Inspect your house for climbing and exploring potential (from a cat’s perspective). When your cat is acclimated to your home, you may be surprised to find her on top shelves or bookcases, so make sure there’s nothing on display that can be damaged or knocked off.
- Look for holes or registers that leave ductwork accessible and cover them up. A kitten or small cat can easily slip into one of these, and they won’t be easy to get out!
- If possible, buy a cat tree for your new family member. Cats like to survey their territory, so a high perch is often a favored resting place.
- If there are other human family members, go over the ground rules about your new pet. Remind them not to startle her and to keep the door to her room shut.
- Do some research on how to introduce your cat to other pets. Keep her door closed and don’t let other pets or people race in unexpectedly.

First Day

Now you're ready for your cat's homecoming. Bring her home in a cat carrier, if possible. She's seen a lot of excitement, so take her directly to her new room (make sure the toilet lid is down, if she's acclimating in your bathroom). Ideally, you would restrict her exposure to the whole family, but naturally, everyone is going to want to see her. Remind them of the ground rules you've set up.

- Sit on the floor and let her come to you. Don't force her. Just let her get acquainted on her own terms. If she doesn't approach, leave her alone and try again later. Some cats are particularly frightened, and she may retreat to her hidey hole and not come out when you're around at all. She may only come out at night when the house is quiet. Give her time.
- Your newly adopted cat may not eat much or at all at first. It's best to give your cat the same food she had at the shelter or in her foster home, at least at first. Keeping some things familiar will make her feel more secure. Be sure to change her water frequently and make sure that she is drinking. If your cat hasn't eaten for a few days, call your vet to ask for advice.

Following Weeks:

It may take your cat a week or two to adjust. Be patient.

- Within a week of being adopted, take your newly adopted cat for her first wellness visit with a veterinarian. If you have a record of immunizations from the shelter, take it with you.
- As your cat adjusts, she'll show signs that she wants to explore outside her safe-haven. Make sure other pets or family members won't startle her while she gradually expands her territory. She may be ready to play, so you can furnish some toys. Many cats like feather wands from the pet supply store, but homemade toys are often favored. A wad of a tissue paper to bat around or a paper bag to hide in can be fun.

Congratulations!

If you follow these tips, you'll be on your way to having a well-adjusted feline family member.