

# Bringing Home Your New Cat

When you're bringing a new cat into your household, the way you start off is so important. Cats need time to adjust to changes. If you take the time to introduce your new cat to your household gradually, you can avoid setting up problems that can take a long time to resolve. How long the introduction process will take will depend on the cat: a young kitten will be more willing to want to explore and learn lots of new things faster than an older cat. Take your cues from your cat and don't rush the process. If you have other pets in the house see handouts "Introducing Cats" and "Introducing Cats and Dogs".

## Supplies for Success

- Litterboxes – The rule is one per cat, plus one. You should also have at least one litterbox on each floor of your house if you have a multi-story house. Place your litterbox in an area that allows your cat to see any and all access points and, ideally, a place that allows for at least two exit points for your cat. Avoid covered litterboxes, at least at first. Scoop the litterbox at least once per day, some cats may prefer an extremely tidy litterbox and this is one way multiple boxes come in handy.
- Litter – Start with a litter that your cat is accustomed to using. If you would like to switch to a different type of litter, offer your cat a box with his regular litter and a second litterbox with the new litter. Gradually adjust the litter by mixing the two types together. As your cat gets used to using the new litter type you can fill all litterboxes with the new brand. Switching too quickly or abruptly may cause your cat to stop using the litterbox all together.
- Scratching posts – Cats have a natural desire and need to scratch. To keep them from destroying your furniture, make sure they have appropriate boards, posts, or other structures to scratch on.
- Toys – Cats like to engage in different types of play, so select a variety of toys. See "Cat Toys – Choosing and Using Them"
- Feliway – This diffuser or spray can help reduce stress in cats, especially for multi-cat households.

## Making the Transition Smooth

When your new cat first comes home, give them a room of their own--a comfortable place with everything they need: food, water, a litter box located away from the food and water, a bed, toys, something to scratch on, and attention from people and playtime on a regular basis. The idea is not to isolate them, but to give a place to get comfortable and feel confident.

Use Feliway products, which simulate feline facial pheromones and sends a message to your cat that the spaces where it is used are safe places for your cat. It comes in a spray as well as a plug-in diffuser. You can use the spray on vertical surfaces where your cats like to hang out including door frames, corners of walls, corners of furniture and cat trees. Feliway comes in two different formulas; one for single cats and one for multi-cat households and, most recently, a FeliScratch formula made especially for cat scratchers. It doesn't work with all cats, but many cat owners report excellent results. Look for suppliers online, or check with your local pet store or with your vet.

After your cat has become comfortable in their own room you can begin giving them access to other parts of your home. You will know your cat is ready when they greet you in a friendly manner when you come into their room, with their tail up and approaching you or purring and squinting their eyes if you approach them when they are relaxing. If your cat has not yet settled into their new digs, give them time before allowing access to other part of your home.

When your cat is ready, you can start by opening the door to their room, just a crack, in the dawn or dusk hours of the day. When you leave the house, make sure that your cat is safely back in their room before you leave so that they don't get trapped outside of their comfortable space or get spooked by something while you are away.

As your cat gets more interested in exploring, you can invite your cat to play in the new areas they feel comfortable in. Bring out a wand toy and engage your cat in hunt. You can follow their playtime with treats or a bit of canned food. When cats are able to play in an area it shows that they are confident there and it also builds associations of comfort and good things. Using play also increases the bond between you and your cat. If your cat isn't interested in playing at that time, give them a treat anyway and try again at another time.

Over time you can allow your cat to stay out and explore longer and longer and have more access to your home. Provide your cat with places to hide and perches to hop up on while they are exploring so they can feel confident that they have an escape in case they sense any danger. If you take your time introducing your new cat to your household, you'll benefit in the long run. Don't rush, and allow your cat to set the pace.