

# BASIC CAT CARE

## **So The Big Moment Is Finally Here!**

You've just adopted a new cat or kitten from your local shelter or rescue. Now it's time to introduce kitty to his new home and the rest of the family. With just a little planning and patience, you can ensure that your cat's adjustment period will be as rapid and stress-free as possible.

## **Home Is Where The Catnip Is**

Cats are, by nature, highly territorial, which means that having a place to call their own is extremely important to their emotional well-being. Your new cat is already in a state of stress from having been in a shelter, given up for adoption and being brought to a strange new home. Your goal is to help make your new cat feel comfortable as quickly as possible.

When you bring your new cat home, confine it to a single room for at least the first few days (with food and litter, of course!). Although this may seem cruel by human standards, it is actually a great kindness to allow your cat to claim ownership of a small new territory at his own pace and without competition.



Some shy cats may hide under the bed for a week or longer. Others will be ready to come out and go exploring after just a day. The important thing is to let the cat emerge whenever he feels ready. You should spend as much time as possible in the room with the cat, but you should NEVER try to force it out of hiding. The cat will let YOU know when it's ready to begin exploring more of the house.

Be sure to leave fresh food and water out at all times and check that it is being consumed. Even stressed cats like to eat. No food for 24 hours or more is possibly a sign of illness and warrants a trip to the vet.

## **Meeting The Family**

Naturally, everyone in the family, especially the kids, will be excited about the new arrival. Children should be invited to visit the new kitty in his room, one at a time. Try to keep your children quiet and seated on these visits so they do not frighten the cat if he's not used to kids. If the cat is friendly and approaches, have them offer an outstretched hand to sniff. If the cat accepts this, they can gently pet the cat. As the cat becomes familiar with the child, they may play with a cat toy on a string or stick.

Teach your children how to properly hold a cat: with one hand under the rump and one hand on the back, held up against their bodies. Don't leave small children unsupervised with your cat.

## **Preventing Bad Habits**

A little training when your cat first comes home will help to prevent any bad habits from becoming established.

**Scratching** is a normal cat behavior to leave his scent on his territory, get exercise and groom his nails. Most cats will leave your furniture alone if you redirect their scratching instincts to an acceptable spot. Invest in some scratching posts. The ones that are wrapped in sisal and/or the corrugated cardboard ones are favorites. If you see him scratching, take him to the appropriate area. Rub a little catnip on it to enhance its appeal. Have a spray bottle handy to spray your cat while firmly saying “NO” if he scratches the couch.

**Jumping** on the countertops is unacceptable to some people. Putting aluminum foil or wax paper on the countertops will stop most cats because of the sound made. This could take awhile. Even if it takes a month, it will be worth the peace of mind in the long run. Of course, there is the handy dandy spray bottle too.

Not using the **litter box** can become a problem if your cat or kitten is not confined to a small area so they become familiar with its location. Even a small apartment is a large area to a tiny kitten.

Introducing a new cat or kitten to your household is exciting, challenging and rewarding. With time, love and patience, your new pet will settle in to become a wonderful and unconditionally loving companion.



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