

Welcome Home Guide



**GULF COAST
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Completing Families Since 1945

Congratulations on the New Addition!



Congratulations on adopting your new feline friend! Bringing a cat into your home is a joyous occasion, and we're thrilled that you've chosen to adopt from our organization. As you embark on this new adventure, remember that patience, understanding, and love are key to building a strong bond with your cat. Every cat is unique, and it may take some time for them to adjust to their new environment. Don't worry—this is normal, and with a bit of time and care, your cat will soon feel right at home.

Over the coming weeks, we'll be sending more information to help smooth the transition to home. For now, here are some essentials to get you started.



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Transition to Home

Bringing a new cat home can be both exciting and challenging. During the initial transition period, it's normal for your cat to exhibit a range of behaviors as they adjust to their new surroundings. Here are some common behaviors you might observe and tips to help smooth the transition.

Common Behaviors

- **Exploration:** Your cat will likely want to explore their new environment. Sniffing around and investigating their surroundings helps them become familiar with new smells and spaces.
- **Hiding:** Cats may hide under furniture or in small spaces as they acclimate to their new home. This is a natural response to a new and unfamiliar environment.
- **Cautiousness:** Your cat may be wary or skittish around new people and sounds. It's important to give them time to adjust.
- **Change in Appetite:** It's not uncommon for cats to eat less or skip meals during the first few days. This should resolve as they become more comfortable, but get in touch with us or contact your veterinarian if poor appetite persists.



Tips for a Smooth Transition



- **Create a Safe Space:** Set up a quiet, comfortable area where your cat can retreat and feel safe. A small space, like a bathroom, is a great option. Include their bed, litter box, food, and water.
- **Establish a Routine:** Cats thrive on routine. Establish a consistent schedule for feeding, playtime, and litter box cleaning.
- **Patience and Understanding:** Give your cat time to adjust at their own pace. Avoid overwhelming them with too much attention or new experiences in the first few days.
- **Gradual Introduction:** Introduce your cat to new areas of the house gradually and under supervision. This helps prevent stress and gives them time to acclimate to different spaces.



Remember

Remember, the key to a successful transition is patience and positive reinforcement. By providing a stable, loving environment, you'll help your new cat feel secure and begin to build a strong bond that will last a lifetime.

A Transitional Safe Space

Creating a transitional space for your new cat can help them adjust to their new environment more comfortably and reduce stress. A small, quiet room like a bathroom or a spare bedroom can serve as a safe haven while they acclimate to their new home. Here are some tips on setting up an effective transitional space:

1. Choose the Right Room

Select a small, quiet room that can be closed off from the rest of the house. This minimizes exposure to unfamiliar sights, sounds, and smells. Ensure the room is free from hazards such as toxic plants, small objects that can be swallowed, and electrical cords.

2. Essential Supplies

Place a clean litter box in one corner of the room. Choose a spot that is easily accessible and away from the feeding area. Set up food and water bowls in a separate area from the litter box. Make sure fresh water is always available. Provide a cozy bed, blanket, or towel for your cat to rest on. Place it in a quiet, safe corner of the room. Include a scratching post or pad to allow your cat to satisfy their natural scratching behavior. Offer a variety of toys to keep your cat entertained and help them feel more at home.

3. Hiding and Perching Spots

Provide hiding spots like boxes, cat tunnels, or covered beds where your cat can retreat if they feel scared or overwhelmed. If possible, include a cat tree, shelf, or chair that allows your cat to perch and observe their surroundings from a higher vantage point.

4. Gradual Introduction

Allow your cat to stay in the transitional space for a few days to a week, depending on how quickly they adjust. Spend time with them in the room, but let them explore at their own pace. Pay attention to your cat's behavior and body language. Once they seem more comfortable and confident, gradually introduce them to other parts of the house.

5. Interaction and Bonding

Spend quality time with your cat in the transitional space. Sit quietly, talk to them softly, and offer gentle petting if they are receptive. Engage in interactive play sessions to help build trust and provide mental stimulation.

6. Gradual Expansion

Once your cat is comfortable in the transitional space, gradually allow them to explore other areas of the house. Start with one room at a time, supervising their exploration.

By establishing a well-prepared transitional space, you provide your new cat with a safe and comfortable environment to adjust to their new home. This gradual approach helps reduce stress and builds a foundation for a happy and confident feline companion.

Shopping List

For Your New Cat

Welcoming a new cat into your home requires some preparation to ensure they have everything they need for a comfortable and happy life. Here's a list to help you get started:

- ✓ **Food and Water Bowls:** Sturdy, non-slip bowls for food and water.
- ✓ **Cat Food:** High-quality cat food appropriate for your cat's age, size, and dietary needs. Consult your vet for recommendations.
- ✓ **Litter Box and Litter:** A clean litter box and appropriate litter for your cat's preferences.
- ✓ **Litter Scoop:** A scoop for keeping the litter box clean.
- ✓ **Collar and ID Tags:** A comfortable, breakaway collar with an ID tag that includes your contact information.
- ✓ **Carrier:** A sturdy carrier for vet visits and travel.
- ✓ **Bedding:** A comfortable bed or blanket for your cat to sleep on.
- ✓ **Toys:** A variety of toys to keep your cat entertained and mentally stimulated. Include interactive toys, balls, and catnip toys.
- ✓ **Scratching Post:** A scratching post or pad to satisfy your cat's natural scratching behavior.
- ✓ **Nail Clippers:** Cat-specific nail clippers or a nail grinder to keep their nails trimmed.
- ✓ **Brush and Comb:** Grooming tools suitable for your cat's coat type to keep their fur healthy and clean.
- ✓ **Comfort Items:** Familiar items like a blanket or toy to provide comfort during travel.

A Cat-Friendly Space

Creating a comfortable and enriching environment for your new cat is essential for their well-being and adjustment to their new home. Here are some key elements to include when setting up a space for your cat:

Places to Perch

Cats love to climb and observe their surroundings from high vantage points. Provide cat trees, shelves, cat walls, and/or window perches to satisfy this natural behavior. Perches near windows can provide mental stimulation and entertainment as cats are given the chance to watch birds and other wildlife.

Places to Hide

Create safe hiding spots where your cat can retreat if they feel scared or overwhelmed. These can include cat tunnels, covered beds, or designated boxes. Ensure there are quiet areas in your home where your cat can relax undisturbed. Avoid high-traffic areas for these spots.

Places to Scratch

Provide scratching posts or pads to allow your cat to satisfy their need to scratch. Place them in areas where your cat likes to scratch, such as near their favorite resting spots. Offer a variety of scratching surfaces, such as sisal, cardboard, and carpet, to find what your cat prefers. Ensure scratching posts are sturdy and tall enough for your cat to fully stretch out while scratching.

Litter Boxes

Place litter boxes in quiet, low-traffic areas where your cat can use them undisturbed. Avoid placing near their food and water bowls. Ensure the litter boxes are easily accessible to your cat. If you have multiple floors, consider having a litter box on each level. Keep the litter box clean by scooping it daily and changing the litter regularly. A clean litter box encourages regular use. In terms of number of litter boxes, you should always have one more litter box than you do cats.

Feeding and Drinking

Set up a designated area for your cat's food and water bowls. Choose a quiet spot away from high-traffic areas to reduce stress during mealtime. Provide fresh water daily. Consider using a cat water fountain to encourage your cat to drink more.

The “Rule of 3”

What to Expect

The "Rule of 3" is a helpful guideline for understanding the key milestones your new cat may reach at different stages of their adjustment period. It provides a general timeline for what to expect as your cat acclimates to their new home and family.

3 Days: Initial Adjustment

In the first three days, your cat is likely to feel overwhelmed. They might be anxious, scared, or unsure about their new environment. It's common for them to be cautious, shy, or even withdrawn.

3 Weeks: Settling In

By the three-week mark, your cat will start to settle in and become more familiar with their new home and family. They may begin to show their true personality, and you might notice changes in behavior as they become more comfortable.

3 Months: Fully Adjusted

After three months, your cat should be fully settled into their new home. They will have formed a bond with you and your family, and their behavior will reflect their comfort and trust.

The "Rule of 3"

Tips for Support

3D



In the first 3 days

Provide Comfort: Ensure your cat has a quiet, comfortable place to retreat to where they can feel safe.

Maintain Routine: Start establishing a consistent routine for feeding, playtime, and litter box cleaning.

Establish a Positive Approach: Reinforce good behavior with treats, praise, and attention. *Never use punishment-based training methods*

Be Patient: Give your cat time to explore their new surroundings at their own pace without forcing interactions.

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After 3 weeks

Continue Positive Reinforcement: Treats, praise, and affection go a long way to help your cat continue to settle in

Increase Socialization: Gradually introduce your cat to new people, pets, and environments to build their confidence.

Interactive Play: Engage in interactive play sessions to keep your cat mentally stimulated and help them bond with you.

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After 3 months

Strengthen Bonding: Engage in regular play, grooming, and bonding activities to strengthen your relationship.

Monitor Health: Continue regular veterinary check-ups and maintain a healthy diet and exercise routine.

Provide Enrichment: Offer a variety of toys, scratching posts, and interactive feeders to keep your cat engaged and happy.

Litter Box Tips

Litter box training is a crucial part of helping your new cat adjust to their home and developing a harmonious living environment. The good news is that most cats use the litter box instinctively and do not require any particular training. Here are some tips to help form and strengthen good litter box habits.

1. Choose the Right Litter Box

Ensure the litter box is large enough for your cat to comfortably turn around and dig. A larger box is better for bigger cats. There are various types of litter boxes, such as open, covered, and self-cleaning. You can try a few to see what your cat prefers.

2. Select the right litter

Cats have preferences for certain types of litter. Unscented litter is generally preferred by most cats as strong scents can be stressful for some cats. Fill the litter box with 2-3 inches of litter. Cats like to dig and cover their waste.

3. Location and Number

Place the litter box in a quiet, low-traffic area that is easily accessible to your cat. Avoid placing it near noisy appliances or in busy areas. If you have multiple cats, provide one litter box per cat plus one extra. Place them in different locations around the house.

4. Establish a Routine

Scoop the litter box daily to keep it clean. Clean the entire box with mild soap and water once a week. Pay attention to your cat's litter box habits. Changes in frequency or difficulty using the litter box can indicate health issues.

5. Addressing Accidents

If your cat has an accident outside the litter box, clean the area thoroughly with an enzymatic cleaner to remove any lingering odors. Never punish your cat for accidents. Punishment can create fear and anxiety, making litter box management harder.

6. Troubleshooting

If your cat stops using the litter box, check for potential issues such as a dirty box, a change in litter type, or stressors in the environment. If litter box issues persist, consult your veterinarian to rule out any medical conditions.



Socializing Kittens



Socialization is a crucial part of raising a well-adjusted and confident kitten. Proper socialization helps kittens develop into friendly, well-behaved adult cats who can handle new experiences and environments without fear or aggression. Early socialization is essential because it shapes a kitten's behavior and attitude toward the world around them.

Socialization Checklist

People

- **Adults:** Expose your kitten to men and women of different ages, sizes, and ethnic backgrounds.
- **Children:** Supervise interactions with children of various ages to ensure positive experiences.
- **Different Appearances:** Introduce people wearing hats, sunglasses, uniforms, or carrying bags.

Other Animals

- **cats:** A If possible, introduce your kitten to calm and friendly cats. Monitor interactions closely.
- **Cats:** Arrange playdates with other cats to help your kitten learn proper feline social behavior.
- **Other Pets:** Expose your kitten to other pets such as birds, rabbits, or small mammals in a controlled and safe manner.

Important Trips

- **Vehicles:** Accustom your kitten to car rides to reduce any travel anxiety.
- **Vet Visits:** Make positive visits to the veterinary clinic without medical procedures to create a positive association.

Sounds

- **Household Noises:** Expose your kitten to vacuum cleaners, blenders, washing machines, and other household sounds.
- **Outdoor Noises:** Let your kitten hear traffic, sirens, fireworks, and thunderstorms from a safe distance to gradually reduce fear.
- **People Noises:** Allow your kitten to hear different voices, laughter, crying, and loud conversations.

Body Handling

- **Paws:** Regularly touch and handle your kitten's paws. Gently press each toe and spread the toes apart. This helps them get used to having their paws handled for nail trims and cleaning.
- **Ears:** Gently touch and look inside your kitten's ears. This can prevent fear of ear cleanings and vet inspections.
- **Mouth:** Lift your kitten's lips and gently touch their teeth and gums. This gets them accustomed to tooth brushing and oral exams.
- **Tail:** Lightly hold and gently move your kitten's tail. This prepares them for grooming and medical exams.
- **Body:** Pet and handle your kitten's entire body, including their belly, legs, and back to help them feel comfortable being touched all over.
- **Positive Reinforcement:** Always use treats and praise while handling different body parts to create a positive association.

The Do's and Don'ts of

Introducing your cat to kids



Do's

- ✔ **Supervise:** Always supervise interactions between your cat and children to ensure safety for both.
- ✔ **Teach Gentle Handling:** Show kids how to pet the cat gently and to not pull ears or tail.
- ✔ **Positive Reinforcement:** Reward your cat with treats and praise for calm behavior around children.
- ✔ **Encourage Calm Behavior:** Teach kids to be calm and quiet around the cat, avoiding sudden movements and loud noises.
- ✔ **Allow Space:** Give your cat a safe space where they can retreat if they feel overwhelmed.
- ✔ **Introduce Gradually:** Allow your cat and children to get to know each other slowly and at their own pace. Introduce only one child at a time, initially



Don'ts

- ✘ **Force Interactions:** Don't force a cat to interact with kids if they're scared or anxious.
- ✘ **Don't Allow Rough Play**
- ✘ **Don't Overwhelm the Cat:** Avoid overwhelming your cat with too many children at once.
- ✘ **Don't Ignore Body Language:** Pay attention to your cat's body language. Remove the cat from the situation if they show signs of stress, such as growling, hissing, or attempting to move away.
- ✘ **Don't Let Kids Disturb the cat:** Teach children not to disturb the cat while they are eating, sleeping, or in their crate.





The Do's and Don'ts of Introducing your cat to other cats

Do's

- ✔ **Take It Slow:** Introduce the cats gradually over a period of days or weeks.
- ✔ **Use Scent Swapping:** Exchange bedding or use a cloth to transfer each cat's scent to the other. This helps them become familiar with each other's scent in a non-threatening way.
- ✔ **Reward Positive Behavior:** Use treats and praise to reward calm and friendly interactions.
- ✔ **Start with a Barrier:** Begin introductions with a barrier, such as a baby gate or a cracked door, to allow the cats to see and smell each other without direct contact.
- ✔ **Short Meetings:** Keep initial meetings brief and positive, gradually increasing the duration.
- ✔ **Monitor Body Language:** Watch for positive signs like relaxed postures, gentle sniffing and playfulness. Pay attention to signs of discomfort, such as hissing, growling, or hiding.
- ✔ **Provide Safe Spaces:** Ensure each cat has their own safe space where they can retreat if they feel overwhelmed. High perches and hiding spots are essential.



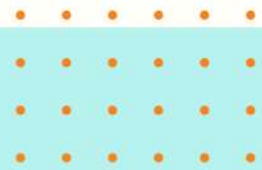
Don'ts

- ✘ **Force Interaction**
- ✘ **Ignore Stress Signs:** Pay attention to signs of stress in both cats. If one cat seems particularly stressed, give them more time to adjust before trying again.
- ✘ **Allow Aggressive Behavior:** If cats show signs of discomfort or aggression like swatting, chasing or biting separate them calmly.
- ✘ **Punish:** Don't punish cats for aggressive or fearful behavior. Punishment can increase anxiety and worsen the situation.
- ✘ **Leave Unsupervised:** Never leave newly introduced cats alone together until you are confident they can interact safely.

By following these do's and don'ts, you can help ensure a safe and positive experience when introducing your cat to other cats. Patience and careful management are key to fostering good relationships between cats.

The Do's and Don'ts of

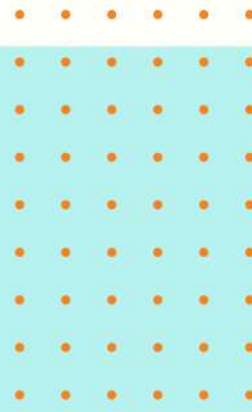
Introducing your cat to dogs



Do's



- ✓ **Take It Slow:** Introduce your cat and dog gradually, allowing them to get used to each other over time.
- ✓ **Use Barriers:** Start introductions with a barrier, such as a baby gate, to allow them to see and smell each other without direct contact.
- ✓ **Keep dog on Leash:** Keep your cat on a leash during the first few face-to-face meetings to maintain control.
- ✓ **Provide Safe Spaces:** Ensure your cat has high perches and escape routes where they can retreat if they feel scared.
- ✓ **Reward Calm Behavior:** Use treats and praise to reward your dog and cat for calm behavior around each other.
- ✓ **Monitor Body Language:** Watch both your dog and cat for signs of stress or aggression and be ready to separate them if needed.
- ✓ **Short Meetings:** Keep initial interactions brief and positive, gradually increasing the duration as they become more comfortable.



Don'ts

- ✗ **Force Interaction**
- ✗ **Allow Chasing**
- ✗ **Ignore Stress Signs:** Pay attention to signs of stress in both pets. For cats, this might include hissing, swatting, or hiding; for dogs, it could be whining, barking, or lunging.
- ✗ **Don't Leave Unsupervised**
- ✗ **Don't Punish Fearful Behavior:** Punishment can increase anxiety and hinder the introduction process.



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TIPS FOR PREVENTING PET LOSS

Microchipping

Microchipping is a simple and effective way to ensure your cat can be identified if they get lost. Be sure that the chip is registered with a national registry and ensure your contact information is always up to date so you can be contacted if your cat is found.

Petco Love Lost:

Petco Love Lost is a free online service using facial recognition to reunite lost pets with their owners. Users can upload a photo for added security and share alerts through Petco Love Lost and local platforms if their cat goes missing. To register your cat, visit [this link](#).

Identification Tags

Ensure your cat wears a collar with an ID tag at all times. The tag should include your pet's name, your phone number, and any other relevant contact info

GPS Collars

Invest in a GPS collar. These devices allow you to track your cat's location in real-time using your smartphone.

ESTABLISH A
RELATIONSHIP
WITH A

Vet

First Visit

Schedule Your First Visit: Schedule your cat's first vet visit within the first week of bringing them home. This initial check-up will ensure they are healthy and address any immediate concerns.



Create a Health Plan

Your vet will provide a vaccination schedule to protect your cat from common diseases. Follow this schedule closely to keep your cat's immunizations up to date.



Establish a Wellness Routine

Schedule regular wellness exams to monitor your cat's health and catch any potential problems early. Annual or bi-annual visits are standard for adult cats.

Discuss dental hygiene and schedule regular teeth cleanings to prevent dental disease.



One of the most important steps you can take as a new cat owner is to establish a relationship with a veterinarian. Regular veterinary care is essential for your cat's health and well-being.

Emergency Preparedness

Emergency Preparedness: Know the location and contact information of the nearest emergency veterinary clinic. In case of an emergency, quick access to veterinary care is crucial. Ask your vet what items should be included in a pet first aid kit for minor injuries and emergencies.



A strong relationship with your vet ensures that your cat will receive the best possible care throughout their life. Regular vet visits are key to responsible pet ownership and contribute significantly to your cat's long-term health and happiness.