

Bringing Home your New Cat

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Adopting a cat from an animal sanctuary is, without doubt, a really good thing to do. However, many adopted cats are abandoned after a few weeks and returned to the sanctuary when people find they can't deal with their new feline friend. The result of this on a cat that once again experiences a breach of trust, and the loss of a caregiver may result in trauma and a deep-seated distrust of humans. Much of this can be avoided if a few simple guidelines are followed.

Remember cats do not naturally live inside buildings or with humans; they do not know who you are and that your intentions are to love and care for them. You are about to take them from the environment they have come to know as home and move them to a totally new place where everything will be strange. Every smell, sound and piece of furniture will be different, even their food may well be different. Imagine yourself in the cat's place and think how you would feel in a totally new environment, surrounded by strangers that are perhaps 30 to 40 times your size.

Firstly, it is best to always use a cat carrier to transport your cat as it is dangerous to have him roaming freely in the car and can cause an accident. Cats rarely like to travel and are often frightened, so speak softly to your cat and try to keep the environment in the car as quiet and peaceful as you can. If possible have someone else do the driving so you can focus on the cat. Take a few minutes before you begin any journey to speak quietly to your cat to reassure him.

When you get your adopted cat home he will probably be highly stressed and will no doubt feel uncomfortable at first. Cats have a strong sense of territory and **THE MOST IMPORTANT THING YOU CAN DO IS TO ALLOW HIM TO ADJUST TO HIS NEW HOME IN HIS OWN TIME.**

Some Helpful Tips

-  The smaller the territory your cat has to become familiar with initially, the quicker he will adjust.
-  Select a small, quiet, comfortable room, preferably with a carpet and some warm, snuggly places for him to sleep with cushions and blankets. Make sure the room is well ventilated but warm and keep the doors and windows closed. A room with subdued lighting is best, so partially close the curtains or blinds if possible. Playing classical music softly in the background, may also help the new arrival to relax.
-  Set the carrier down in a corner, open it up and sit down quietly on the opposite side of the room or leave the room completely. Don't push the cat out; allow him to come out in his own time. Don't try to smother him with attention; he will come to you when he is ready.

- 🐾 In the meantime, you can use eye signals to communicate with your cat – blinking and looking away which is a ‘calming signal’ that cats use with each other. You can use a slow half blink or a full blink. With some cats, glancing away after the blink works well. The most important part of this is to be thinking love and good feelings towards your cat as you do this. This will allow him to release some of his fear and start to build a bond of trust between you.
- 🐾 It may take him some time to come out of his carrier, and when he does he will probably run and hide under a bed or chair. Do not try to catch him or encourage him to come out. Leave him alone and he will come out in his own time. The more you try to rush the adjustment time, the longer it will take. It is best to go about your business elsewhere in the house.
- 🐾 Set up his room with food and water. Place a litter box near his hiding place but away from his food and water. Put the litter in the box outside the room so you do not frighten him unduly with the noise. Set up a scratching post and place a few toys around the room.
- 🐾 Remember that your cat will need time to adjust to the new smells and sounds, and will be watching everything that is going on including every move you make. His first impressions of you and his new environment are very important in how quickly he will settle in and begin to trust you. He will need time to get to know you. **DON'T RUSH HIM OR FORCE HIM. REMEMBER THAT TO GO SLOW IS TO GO FAST.** Do not invite friends and family over to meet the cat, he will need a few weeks of peace and quiet to get acquainted with you and his new environment. Don't take it personally if he is not sitting in your lap as soon as you had hoped; he will come to you for affection when he is ready. By doing the ‘calming signals’ often you will be ‘speaking his language’ and will win his trust and affection more quickly.
- 🐾 You can also try to speed up the ‘getting to know you’ process by offering him treats, which can be some special food such as pieces of fresh shrimp. Do not try to give them to him but leave them lying out in **THE MIDDLE OF THE ROOM.** Don't try to approach him with them **AS THIS MAY APPEAR THREATENING TO YOUR CAT.** The treats are meant to speed up the cat approaching you not the other way round.
- 🐾 When the cat has obviously adjusted to the territory of the small room, which may take several days or even a week, you can begin to leave the door open so he can begin to explore the rest of the house. Again, let him do this in his own time. Often a cat will venture out at night when you are asleep and it is quiet. Allow him to come and go as he pleases and leave the door open so he can run back to the safety of his ‘known space’ if something scares him. Soon he will have explored and adjusted to your whole house.
- 🐾 Now you can move the food bowls and litter box to a more convenient place. Have 2 or 3 litter boxes and wait until he knows where they are before you take one away. That way you will not have any ‘accidents’.

- 🐾 When your cat is beginning to approach you, wait quietly until he comes to you. Perhaps you can use a toy to encourage communication between you. When you begin to touch him, do so with the back of your hand which is a TTouch known as the Llama Touch. This is less invasive as the cat does not feel threatened that you are going to try to grab or pick him up. TREAT HIM GENTLY AND WITH RESPECT AT ALL TIMES AND HE WILL LEARN TO LOVE AND TRUST YOU. Speak quietly to him at all times.
- 🐾 If your cat continues to be stressed and fearful it could be for several reasons. Firstly, he may have experienced being abused by humans and it may take you longer to win his trust. TTouch can greatly help a cat reduce their fear and regain self-confidence and can help you to build a loving bond in a much shorter time. If you have adopted a kitten, it may be that he is missing his mother or siblings; this is also where TTouch can be useful. TTouch will help a kitten to calm down and feel welcome.

If you are adopting another cat

- 🐾 It is best if possible to select a cat that is different in age and sex to the resident cat(s) or at least to the last one to come into the family.
- 🐾 It is important to give your resident feline family more love and affection than the new arrival at the beginning. They are the ones that will feel their space is being invaded, and they will need the extra attention to prevent them feeling jealous and insecure.
- 🐾 When the new arrival seems to be adjusting to you and the room, you can begin to introduce them by getting them used to the smell of each other. You can do this by rotating their bedding. After a few days you can begin by letting them smell each other under the door. Once they have had plenty of opportunity to adjust to each other's scent you can begin to leave the door open.
- 🐾 The new cat will eventually creep out to meet the resident cat(s). What may happen is that they arch their backs and hiss at each other and then flee to safety. Do not panic. Most initial encounters can appear to be hostile but are not. Leave the door open so the newcomer can retreat to his own room and IT IS BEST NOT TO INTERFERE. THEY NEARLY ALWAYS WORK IT OUT BY THEMSELVES.

We hope that you find these tips useful and we wish you every joy with your feline friend...

*For more information and further help with your adopted cat contact:
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