



Bringing Home Your New Cat or Kitten

Congratulations on adopting your new kitty! You have years of friendship, affection and play to look forward to. Here are some instructions to help you help kitty to make the transition to his/her new home.

Cats are creatures that like routine. They dislike change and can take weeks to adjust to a new environment. When you adopt a cat, you are asking him/her to adjust to new surroundings, new people, new routines and maybe other animals. It is natural for them to be stressed and nervous. Be patient with your new kitty!

The Preliminaries: Before bringing kitty to your home

1. Make an appointment with the vet to have your new cat examined as soon as possible, perhaps even before you bring him/her home
2. Make sure you have a sturdy travel carrier for the trip home and trips to the vet. Nervous cats feel more secure in enclosed spaces. Also, an unrestrained cat in a car is dangerous, and it can easily escape when you open the car door and may never be seen again. You will also appreciate the carrier if your cat vomits, urinates or defecates during the trip, as some cats do when they are nervous. WAG may be able to loan you a carrier for your first trip home and your first trip to the vet.
3. Obtain supplies you will need: food and water dishes, litter box, litter, toys, scratching post, and bedding. Set these up in a quiet room that you can close off such as a spare bedroom or bathroom. A cat may be overwhelmed by an entire house or apartment. They will feel more secure and less stressed if they can spend their first few days in one room, getting to know you.
4. If you already have pets, ensure that they are up to date on their vaccinations.
5. Kitten-proof your home: if you are adopting a young kitten, there are some precautions you will need to take. Kittens are like toddlers and they can easily get into trouble. Look around for breakable items that can be easily knocked over and put them somewhere safe. Keep floors and surfaces clear of thread, rubber bands, and strings: kittens or cats may ingest these and suffer an intestinal blockage. Always keep the door to your dryer closed as cats and kittens like to seek out warm places to sleep. Tie up cords on window blinds so that the kitten cannot strangle itself. Kittens love to climb

drapes and you may wish to tie them up until he/she learns to use the scratching post. Keep your toilet lid down at all times. Put all harmful substances safety out of harms way. Cover electrical cords. Cats love to eat plants, but many common household plants are harmful or poisonous - check to make sure that you don't have any these plants. Check your feet: kittens can easily get underfoot. Kittens are curious, so be observant when opening the refrigerator, opening drawers and cupboard, or moving a chair.

Not all cat toys are safe. Some toys have small plastic bits that could be eaten by cats. Be aware of which toys you leave with your kitten when he/she is unsupervised. It is a good idea to confine your kitten to a "safe" room when you are not home to supervise the kitten.

First day in kitty's new home

When you bring home your new cat, place him/her, still in the carrier, inside the room you have set up ahead of time. Close the door to this room. Open the door to the carrier but don't force kitty to come out. Wait for kitty to come out on his own. Some cats may come out on their own right away; more timid cats may stay inside the carrier for some time. Leave them alone for a while or sit quietly and wait. The cat will come out when it is comfortable. Once the cat decides to come out, stay where you are and allow her to come to you. Pet the cat if he seems interested but don't pick him up. Allow him to explore the room. Leave the carrier in the room with the door open so that she/he may retreat to the safety of the carrier if needed.

Introducing your kitty to your children

Once kitty has explored the room, introduce children and other family members slowly. Have them come into the room one at a time, sit quietly and allow the cat to come to them. You may have them offer treats to the cat. Be sure that your children understand how to gently pet the cat, and not to tease the cat, chase him, pull his tail, or bother him when he's eating or using the litter box. They should always be gentle and avoid using their hands as toys. You don't want your cat to learn that it is acceptable to pounce on and bite hands. Preferably, children should be taught to play with the cat using a toy on a string or a stick.

Introducing your kitty to the rest of your home

Allow the cat several days to settle in to his/her room and get to know you. Once he/she seems comfortable and safe there and you do not have other pets, you may begin to slowly introduce kitty to the rest of the house. Begin with short periods of exploration and gradually increase them until kitty has explored the

house. Don't force the cat to explore. Let him come out on his own. The cat should be able to retreat to the safety and familiarity of his room.

Introducing your new kitty to your other cat

If you already have another cat in your home, it is especially important to place your new cat in a room of his own for the first several days in your house. The cats will quickly become aware of each other. They will be able to smell each other underneath the door. Some initial hissing is to be expected. You can also get them used to each other's smell by exchanging their bedding or rubbing towels on them and letting them sniff the towels. Feed your cats on opposite sides of the door of the new kitty's room. This way they will associate the smell of the other cat with a positive thing: food. After several days, switch the cats around and bring your cat into the new kitty's room and let new kitty explore the rest of the house. Do this slowly, gradually increasing the amount of time you allow new kitty to explore the rest of the house. Work your way up to a few hours over several days.

Now you may introduce the cats face to face. You can try propping open the door to new kitty's room just enough so that they can see each other but not enough so that either can slip through. There may be some hissing, spitting and growling. Do this for very short periods over the course of a few days. Then try feeding the cats in the same room but at opposite sides of the room. Put them in the same room only at mealtime. Each day move their bowls a bit closer together until they are side by side. If this goes well and they are comfortable with each other, then they are ready to come and go in the house together as they please. At first, only allow this to happen when you are home to observe them and ensure that they are getting along. It's best not to show more attention to one cat than the other when the cats are meeting. Most cats will eventually work things out between them, even though their initial greetings appear hostile. Remember though that not all cats will get along. Cats are territorial and a cat that is used to living on its own may not adjust to having another cat on its territory. The best combinations are cats that are of opposite sex (provided they are spayed and neutered) and of different ages.

You should have one litter box for each cat to prevent a dominant cat from stalking the other. With both cats under stress, now is the time when one or both cats may cease to use the litter box. Make sure that you deliver lots of praise to each cat when they use the litter box.

Introducing your new kitty to your dog

Follow the steps above; keeping new kitty a room of his own with the door closed for the first few days to allow him to settle in. Do not allow the dog into this room.

You can feed the cat and the dog on opposite sides of the door. When you decide that kitty is ready to explore the rest of the house, make sure that the dog is outside or crated when the cat is exploring. Give the cat time to become comfortable in the house before introducing her to the dog. When ready, put your dog on a short leash and place the dog in a sit/stay. Let the cat come into the room and approach the dog on its own. The concern here is that either the dog will become aggressive with the cat, or the cat will scratch the dog. As long as the dog remains calm, praise him and give him treats. You can have another family member feed treats to the cat on the other side of the room to give the animals time to adjust to each other. Do lots of short visits with the dog in a sit/stay until the dog and cat can tolerate each other without aggression or fear. Monitor the two animals closely and do not leave them alone together until you are sure that they get along.

Ensure that your cat has retreats where it can escape from the dog. Some cats like to have high shelves or cat trees. Baby gates positioned across doorways work well. The cat can slip under the gate but the dog cannot enter the room. Place litter boxes in areas where the dog cannot reach them. Many dogs like to eat cat feces and the dog may frighten the cat and prevent it from using the litter box.

Socializing your kitty

It is important to spend time socializing your cat or kitten to avoid having it become fearful or aggressive towards people. Kittens are easy to socialize, as they are not frightened by strangers. Expose them to lots of different people and get them used to being gently handled. Pick them up, open their mouths, touch their feet, belly, tail, etc. Make sure that these experiences are pleasant and not frightening. A timid adult cat will require more time to socialize.

Work on developing your cat's trust in you before you introduce him/her to strangers. Don't force a frightened cat to meet strangers. Let them approach strangers on their own. This could take weeks but if they find it to be pleasant and rewarding, such as getting a treat, they will gradually learn to trust others. You also want to get your cat used to being touched. Start slowly with short periods of petting in places you know it enjoys such as on the top of the head. Gradually increase the areas you are petting and deliver praise as long as the cat remains relaxed. If the cat appears tense or agitated, stop the session and leave him alone. If you have a sense for how long your cat will tolerate being petted and touched, try to stop before he/she becomes agitated.

Enjoy your new kitty! If you have any ongoing questions, you can always contact us at WAG: 604.935.8364.