

Preparing for a New Cat

The arrival of a new cat is exciting for adopters, but frequently confusing and stressful for the cat itself. Whether introducing your cat to your family or to other pets, first impressions matter, and failure to plan ahead can negatively affect long-term success.

Take the following steps to get everyone off to a great start.

Set up a sanctuary room

Pick a small room, such as a laundry room or guest bedroom where your cat will spend their first week. The room should be clean, uncluttered, and as quiet as possible. Furnish it with at least one litter box with unscented clumping litter, water, bedding for the cat, toys, and at least one hiding place (a paper bag on its side will even work). The purpose of this is not to punish or ignore the cat, but to allow them to slowly acclimate to their new surroundings without becoming overly stressed. If you have other animals, this also protects them from being exposed to illnesses the new cat might be carrying.

Give them space

While it may be tempting – especially for children – to rush in and cuddle with the cat, your cat might not be ready for this. Many recently adopted cats hide for the first few days, if not the first week. Be ready for this and let them decide if, and when, they want to approach family members. Bring a book and simply sit in their room to allow them to get used to you. Hand feeding treats can also help the process.

Prepare litter boxes

Provide enough litter boxes to equal one per cat, plus one. Space them out around your house, with preferably one per floor. Avoid placing them in areas where your cat might feel trapped, such as a closet or corner. Some cats may avoid covered litter boxes for the same reason. Use an unscented, clumping litter. We recommend scooping each box once a day and a full clean every 1-2 weeks.

Cat proof your house

Once your cat is safely in their room, go through your house and look for potential dangers and problem areas. Tie up dangling cords, hide fragile knick-knacks, lock up hazardous chemicals, shut doors to forbidden areas, put away any food on your countertops, pick up clothes on the floor (a potential “litterbox”), and make sure all windows and doors are secure and latched.