

# Bringing a New Cat Home: Preventing Problems.



## Preparation: Supplies for a new cat

Congratulations, you've decided to adopt a cat! To ease integration into your home, take into consideration where your cat came from. Was she staying in a cage, a room, or in a foster home? Were there other cats living with her or was she alone? Was the environment noisy or quiet? How often did she eat and where did she sleep?

Changing all of these factors in her environment all at once can be very stressful. In order to integrate your new cat into your house and life as smoothly as possible, you must be able to recognize the signs of stress while changing her living situation slowly over time. With this method, you are initially maintaining her previous routine, while changing to your routine over time.

First, prepare to welcome your cat home by making sure you have these items on hand.

- Food and water bowls
- Collar with ID tag
- Food (to ease the transition, try to stick with the food your cat is used to eating at first and gradually switch to another food).
- Litter box and litter
- Scratching post
- Cat bed, toys and brush

## Recognizing signs of stress in your cat

Your new cat will likely be stressed initially. Signs of stress can include decreased appetite, decreased grooming, hiding, lack of interest in attention or affection, and sleeping in unusual locations. A stress cat may be more quiet than usual, which can be difficult to notice. Very stressed cats are more likely to behave aggressively or fearfully.

When adopting from The Rescue Crew, this will most likely be your cat's fourth "home" in a fairly short period of time. Even though your home is much more comfortable than living on the streets or being confined in a shelter, change is stressful. Watch for signs of stress, and if you see them, make certain that they lessen over time. If her stress is not slowly decreasing every day, please reach back out to us for assistance.

## Your cat's environment

Many cats are fearful when introduced to their new home; Your home has different smells and noises than the shelter and the home where your cat lived before. Initially, confine your new cat to one room. A bedroom often works well for this. Make sure you regularly spend time in this room with her.

Provide her with multiple hiding places. A cardboard box with holes cut in both sides and a blanket can be a great hiding place. Be certain to provide spots both on the ground as well as up high. When she is in her hiding place, do not disturb her; this should be her special place where she can have privacy. Also, place a scratching post or cat tree in the room.

Let your cat adjust to the room, and to you, at her own pace. Do not force her to stay near you. Instead, coax her to you by playing with an interactive toy or staying near her food bowl while she's eating. Once she realizes that you provide all the same good things that her previous owner did, she will warm quickly to you and accept your attention. Once your cat is comfortable walking around the room, expand her access to the entire house.

**The process takes time and patience, but it's worth the wait! Give your cat a chance to become part of the family and finally feel forever home.**



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## Your cat's diet

Cats eat less when they are stressed, and sometimes stop eating altogether. It is extremely important to make sure that your cat is eating regularly (and adequate amounts) once you have brought him home. If possible, buy the same type of food that they were eating. If he is not eating, try mixing a little bit of a tastier food, such as canned cat food or baby food, into his meal.

After two days, or once he is eating regularly, slowly change him over to the diet that you would like to feed him. Make sure you feed your cat high-quality food. On the first and second days, feed him 25 percent of your diet and 75 percent of his previous diet, mixed together. On the third and fourth days, give him 50 percent of each. On the fifth and sixth days, switch to 75 percent of your diet and 25 percent of the prior diet. On the seventh day, feed him 100 percent of your preferred food. Changing your cat's diet too rapidly can cause upset to his system (decreased appetite, vomiting, and/or diarrhea).

Decide whether you wish to feed your cat once daily, twice daily or free feed (which means leaving dry food out at all times). Some cats who are free fed may not properly control their food intake and become overweight, which predisposes them to health problems. For most cats, twice-daily feeding is ideal. You can also put some of your cat's daily ration into a food-dispensing toy. Food-dispensing toys are a fun way for your cat to "hunt" for their food, and are a great enrichment tool.

## Litter box habits

Provide your cat with an uncovered, clean litter box. Covered litter boxes can trap odors inside the box, which is nice for you, but not for your cat. Cats are often quite fastidious; they are sensitive to the smell of urine and feces, as well as deodorizers.

Reducing the smell inside and around the litter box can be very important for them. Scoop out the litter box once daily, and empty it completely to clean it every two weeks. When you clean the litter box, use a mild soap, not strong-smelling detergents or ammonia.

The most common reason that cats are brought to shelters is litter box problems. Following the above recommendations can make the difference between a cat who is house-trained and a cat who isn't. Remember that if you do not like the smell of the litter box, your cat probably doesn't either; keep it clean and you'll have a happy cat.

## Cat toys

There are many different toys that your cat might like to play with. Cats like novelty, so buy several different types of toys for her and try them out. Play with the toys with your cat; do not set them out and expect her to play with them on her own.

If she is not interested in them for the first few days, give her time, and try different toys. Do not play with your cat with your hands. Using your hands as a toy teaches your cat that it is okay to bite or scratch you.

