

# Bringing Home Your New Cat or Kitten

Posted by Jennifer on February 9th, 2010



Congratulations! You are the proud new owner of an adopted cat or kitten, or just about to be one, and are reading this for blog article for advice on how to best ease your new feline friend into their new home. There's lots you can do in the first 24 hours to ease your new housemate in easily, with the help of our guidelines to help your new kitty adjust to their new home... once they've gotten there! Unlike dogs, most cats really do not enjoy traveling in a car. Please do not leave them loose in your car, or try to hold them in your lap or on the seat next to you, where they might panic and cause an accident, or try to hide and get stuck under a seat! In a car, it is safest for them to be secured in a cat carrier, lined with an easily washable towel or a few sheets of newspaper. They may complain by meowing... loudly... but some cats relax with soothing music, or if you sing along! Then once you all get safely home....

## **Arriving At Home – The Starter Room**

To make your new cat's transition to your household as comfortable as possible, select a quiet, closed-in area such as your bed room or a small room away from the main foot traffic, and set it up with a litter box, bed, scratching post, toys, food and water. It's completely normal for a cat to be scared (especially after a car trip, or if they are coming from a shelter), and take days or weeks to adjust to their new environment. Let them adjust at their own pace.

Be sure that this "starter room" has very secure screens, and keep the windows securely closed. More than once a new kitty, who is actually quite happy in his new home, has decided to check the out-of-doors, pulls off a screen (often seemingly miraculously) and takes off. The escapee is then disoriented, and can very likely become lost and injured.

## **Litter Box Location**

If possible, make the starter room the permanent location of the litter box. If you plan on having the permanent location of the litter box be elsewhere, you'll need two litter boxes. Once kitty has adjusted, and seems relaxed and happy in their starter room, you can open the door and let them explore the rest of your home. (Before you open the door, if you have other pets, see Meeting the Household below.) Keep the 1st litter box in the same location, and put a new litter box in the new location. Once the cat is using

the new litter box, you can slowly, a foot or two a day, move the 1st litter box closer and closer to the new one, and then when they are next to each other, remove one box.

### **Going Outside**

We prefer that domestic cats be kept as indoor-only pets, but understand that some homes (and some cats) prefer to take the risk of the dangers outside, and let their cats roam freely. Please do consider the advantages of keeping your new cat indoors always — outdoor cats are exposed to disease, cat fights, being killed by dogs and other wild animals, and hit by cars.

Whatever you do, don't let your new kitty go outside when you first bring it home! Even if your new kitty cries at the door or window, please keep them inside!! Despite stories about cats finding their way home, in reality your new cat is very likely to become lost. Also, young kittens should be kept indoors at least until they are full grown (around 12 months).

If you do want to have an indoor/outdoor cat, how about a cat-escape-proof enclosure to keep your cat contained and predators out — like a [catio](#)! An enclosure with a top will protect from flying predators and those that can climb and jump like coyotes. Adding a cat-proof-fence (like one with an angled-in topper or smooth vinyl over 7 feet high) offers some protection too.

If your cat will be free roaming, do wait *at least four weeks* before allowing your adult cat to go outside, to give it a chance to bond to your family. If your adult cat must go outside, bringing him inside at night may reduce the risk of being killed by some predators. To train your cat to come in at night, set his one daily feeding time during his month indoors to be at the hour when you want him to come inside for the night, and continue to feed him (even just putting out new dry food) at that same time, calling him to come in for his dinner. You can reinforce his coming in with treats as well.

### **Meeting the Household**

Let your new cat get to know and trust household members, before it must adjust to the entire home — one thing at a time! Sometimes even the most friendly cat needs a few days to feel safe in a new environment.

If you have other pets, don't introduce the new pet immediately. We have more detailed blog articles on [Introducing Your New Cat or Kitten to Resident Cats](#) but here are some quick tips: Keep your new pet totally separated at first, in their own room. For multi-cat households, when your new cat/kitten is from a shelter, rescue, or kennel, this separation period should be 14 days to prevent the spread of contagious diseases during their incubation period. Before making any pet introductions, let the new pet get to know and trust you, and let your other pets discover they are still loved — although they smell a new furry one in the house, they are not going to lose their home and family.

### **Time to Adjust**

It will take time for everyone to adjust, sometimes weeks or months. At first, allow your

pets lots of time for sniffing under the door to the new pet's room. Try switching rooms for awhile, and let the new cat explore the house, and let your current cat spend time in the room, sniffing around. As they progress, try allowing them to check out each other through a screen door or sliding glass door, or other safe ways of exploring these "strangers". This effort can prevent an unpleasant introduction that is hard to recover from.

Tempting though it may be, it can be a big mistake to rush this process. The slow approach is well worth the extra time, and you ensure your pets are all happy and comfortable in your home.