

YOUR NEW BEST FRIEND: PREPARING FOR YOUR NEW CAT

Bringing home a new cat is very exciting for adopters, but often worrisome for the cat themselves. Cats are creatures of habit and routine—coming to your house turned her world upside down. Luckily, acclimating your new cat is fairly straightforward and involves just a few steps.

Give her space

Pick a small, quiet room in your house for your new cat to begin inspecting her surroundings. A bedroom or bathroom is perfect—your cat has been living in a small space at the shelter and it is more comfortable for them to start small and gradually work up to larger spaces. Giving your cat free rein of the whole house immediately on arrival can be very overwhelming. Plan to keep your cat in their room for a few days. Some cats will open up sooner than others, but typically it will take a few days for them to relax and be comfortable with all the new smells, sounds, and people.

Provide the necessities

Make sure your cat has access to food, water, and a litter box in her room. Visit your cat regularly and be open to engagement on her schedule. Initially, she may be afraid and spend a lot of time hiding, or even seem aggressive. However, she should soon become more accustomed to you and start opening up. You can try playing with or petting her if she seems interested, but she shouldn't be pressured into any unwanted contact.

Give her places to hide

Cats love to hide, especially in new places where they might feel insecure. Give your cat lots of hiding places, which can be spaces under furniture, cardboard boxes, blankets, or special cat beds. When your cat first comes home, she might hide a lot—no need to be alarmed, just make sure she's still eating, drinking, and eliminating as normal. If there are children around, make sure they know to keep interactions with the cat quiet and calm.

Explore slowly

If, after some time, your cat seems more comfortable, you can start letting her explore new parts of the house bit by bit. It's important not to overwhelm her and to move at her pace. Keep the litter box, food, and water in the same room so that she knows those things aren't moving. If the house is large, you might provide a second litter box in a different part of the house to eliminate accidents.

If you have other pets

If you have other pets in your home, it will be more important to keep your new cat in her room for longer. This gives the cat time to get to know you and the smells in the house, as well as gives your other pets time to acclimate to your new cat's smells. After some time, you can try swapping the other pets with the cat: bring your cat outside her room and put your other pets in her room for a brief time. This lets everyone smell without contact. Slowly, you can try letting your cat explore the house with the other pets present. If you have a dog, it might help to keep it on a leash while your cat is out so the cat isn't overwhelmed or chased. If you are introducing another cat, go slow and know that cats can take a while to warm up to each other. Watch for very aggressive behavior or fighting, and make sure everyone has time apart to take breaks.

