



What You Need to Know: Settling Your Cat into Their New Home

A new home with new people can be overwhelming! Even confident cats need time to gradually settle in until their new home becomes familiar territory. Every cat is different- it may take a few days, or a few months for your cat to feel safe and relaxed.

01 Prior to Adoption

Set Up a Safe Space:

Start Small: Setting up a designated room with everything your cat needs will help them feel safe and secure. A spare bedroom, office, or bathroom works well for this.

Provide Places to Hide: Cats are prey animals, it's in their biology to be uncertain of new people, animals, and environments. Providing accessible safe spaces to hide will help them feel secure. Try a cave style bed, box on its side, or soft bed under a chair. Block off access to inaccessible spaces like under the bed or couch.

Safe Room Essentials:

- Multiple Accessible Hiding Spaces
- Elevated Places to Perch
- Food and Water
- Litter Box
- A Surface to Scratch
- Toys

Tip: Gradually give your cat access to other spaces in the home only after they are comfortable interacting with you and using their litter box consistently.

02 Bringing Your Cat Home

First impressions matter!

Rushed introductions may result in fearful or territorial behaviours. Resist the urge to introduce your cat to other pets or lots of new people when they arrive home with you.

- **Cover your newly adopted cat's carrier with a blanket or towel while traveling,** this will help them stay calm -ask staff if you can take a blanket from your new cat's pen so they have something familiar with them.
- Keep the carrier covered when you enter your home and **take your new cat straight to their private safe space.**
- Open the carrier and let your cat choose whether they wish to exit – avoid forcing or luring your cat out of hiding at this stage.
- **Give your cat plenty of time to get acquainted with their new space.** It may take several days or weeks for your cat to feel comfortable in their new environment.

Tip: If your new cat is choosing to hide, try not to take it personally. Avoid forcing physical contact or moving them from the space they feel safe.



03 Golden Rules

A Predictable Routine: Cats benefit from routine and find comfort in the familiar. Feeding, playing, and giving your cat time to rest at similar times daily will help them feel at ease.

Give Your Cat Choice: Animals (including humans!) feel safest when they are in control of their environment and interactions. Respecting your cat's comfort zone and letting them choose when to interact is more likely to result in a positive and trusting relationship. Patience pays off!

Learn Cat Body Language: Learning how to read what your cat is telling you with their body language will help prevent miscommunications and reduce stress for both you and your pet.

Use Positive Reinforcement: Find out what your new cat likes - a favourite treat, toy, or activity that makes them feel happy and relaxed. Use these things to bond with your cat and encourage desired behaviours.



Do Pet Introductions SLOWLY.

Ask our team for more information about how to safely introduce pets.

Avoid Punishment: Cats don't understand what 'no' means and using deterrents like a spray bottle or raising your voice can have negative side effects on their behaviour and emotional health.



04 Indoors or Outdoors?

An Indoor Lifestyle:

With adequate environmental enrichment and daily positive interactions with their humans, cats can live long, healthy, and very happy lives as indoor pets.

Indoor cats remain safe from preventable disease and injury caused by vehicles, other animals, harmful substances, and sun damage.

Outdoor Access:

If letting your cat outside is important to you, we recommend doing so only after you and your cat have developed a trusting relationship, and they are familiar with your home. Practicing recall training indoors prior to giving outdoor access will be helpful.

Kittens should be kept exclusively indoors until at least 6 months of age.

Enjoying The Outdoors Safely:

There are many ways your cat can enjoy the great outdoors without exposing them to the potential dangers.

- Provide a window perch so your cat can watch wildlife.
- Make a snuffle box with cat-friendly outdoor elements like grass, leaves and twigs.
- Keep cat-friendly potted plants indoors - cat grass, cat nip, or cat mint.
- Practice harness training.
- Supervised time in a secure outdoor space like a balcony or enclosed courtyard.
- Build a Catio!



05 Feeding Your Cat

Changing Your Cat's Diet: Introduce dietary changes gradually to reduce the likelihood of vomiting or gastrointestinal upset.

Number of Days	Current Food	New Food
1-3	100%	0%
4-6	75%	25%
7-9	50%	50%
10-12	25%	75%
13+	0%	100%

Tip: Check the label to ensure you're feeding your cat the correct amount and the food you're buying provides a complete and balanced diet. Some cat foods are intended as a treat or supplement only.



Did you Know? Cats in the wild spend much of their time and energy hunting for food. Use enrichment feeding to help your cat express their natural behaviours, prevent obesity and give your cat something fun to do! Ask our team for more information.

06 Adopting More Than One Cat?

Consider adopting littermates, two kittens, or two cats that have been surrendered together. These pairs will have a higher likelihood of coexisting peacefully.

Tip: Ensure that each cat has access to multiple and separately located resources. This will reduce competition and opportunities for conflict.

07 Health Care

Regular veterinary care is essential for your cat's long-term health and should be factored into the planned costs when adopting a cat.

Vaccination: Kittens should finish their full vaccination course to ensure they are protected from preventable disease and illness. An annual vaccination is recommended for adult cats. Adoption staff will advise you on your new cat or kitten's vaccination schedule.

Parasite Control: Treating your cat regularly with parasite prevention treatments (flea and worming) will ensure your pet avoids preventable illness. Even indoor cats benefit from these treatments.

Cat Flu: Settling into a new environment can be stressful, and stress effects the immune system response. Sometimes cats will show signs of flu brought on by sudden changes in their environment. Keep an eye out for the following symptoms: watering eyes, sneezing, discharge from eyes or nose, congestion, or inappetence. Get in touch with a vet clinic if you observe these signs.

Our private vet clinic is currently accepting new patients:

The Lost Dogs Home Vet Hospital
1 Boundary Rd, North Melbourne
Victoria 3051
03 8379 4498

Additional Resources:

Chin, Lili (2023). Kitty Language, Penguin.

Cat School Clicker Training - Teach your cat their name and to come (youtube.com)

<https://www.companionanimalpsychology.com/p/all-about-cats.html>

The Lost Dogs Home Animal Behaviour & Training Team
03 8379 4470