



Starting Out Right

Tips for Bringing Home a New Cat

Bringing a new cat home can be overwhelming, there is so much to think about! This guide will provide some tips on how to get started with your new kitty.

The Shopping List

Feeding

Food for everyday meals - commercial brand cat food, wet or dry.

Cat treats

Food and water dishes

Transportation

Cat carrier

Home management and comfort

Litter Box (one for each level of your home, or one for each cat)

Litter

Soft bed

Scratching post

Variety of toys

Catnip

Hiding boxes or high up shelves

Grooming and Care

Brush

Nail clippers

Home Setup

Before bringing your cat home, set up an area for your cat to safely rest. Start off by keeping your cat in a smaller area (like a bedroom or other small room) for a day or two before gradually letting them have access to the rest of your home. This will let your cat get used to the new smells and sounds without getting overwhelmed. Before giving your cat free roam of the home, make sure they are appropriately using their litter box, as well as eating and drinking normally. You may want to try a Feliway plug in and some calming music in this area to help ease any potential stress.

You will also want to cat-proof your home. This means removing string, ribbon, yarn, rubber bands, hair ties, paper clips, pins, dental floss and anything else that may look fun to play with and be easily ingested.



The Litterbox

Location

The litter box should be kept in a location that affords your cat some privacy but is also accessible. We advise placing a mat or towel near the entrance to make sure the area is non-slip. This will also help keep litter from tracking all over the house. There should be at least one litter box per cat in the home. This will prevent any guarding of the box, or a line for the bathroom!

Type of Litter

This depends on your cat! When you find a litter that your cat likes, stick with it. Many cats can be put off by changing litters. We recommend an absorbent and non-scented litter. Litter should be about two inches deep in the box.

Cleaning the Box

To meet the needs of the most discriminating cat, feces should be scooped out of the litterbox daily. How often you change the litter depends on the number of cats you have, the number of litterboxes, and the type of litter you use. Twice a week is the general guideline for clay litter, but depending on the circumstances, you may need to change it every other day or only once per weeks. If you scoop the litter daily, scoopable clumping litter may need to be changed every two weeks. If you notice an odor or if much of the litter is wet or clumped, it's time for a change. Wash your litter box with soap and water, avoid using any harsh or scented chemicals.

Playing with your Cat

Another good habit to start right away! Cats may have a different play style than dogs, but it's just as important. Toys help fight boredom and give cats an outlet for their instinctive prey chasing behaviors. Playtime is also a bonding experience for you and your new buddy.

Soft Toys

These should be machine washable. If not a specific cat toy, look for toys safe for children under 3 years of age and which do not contain dangerous fillings (nutshells, gel beads, etc.) You can also try toys wrapped in sisal for the cat that doesn't want a very soft toy. It's common for cats to want to carry around a toy in their mouth.

Active Toys

These will be toys that require interaction with a person or provide something for your cat to chase. Balls with bells, flirt poles (a toy on a string that you have your cat chase), ping pong balls, wine corks, paper bags, and empty cardboard tubes can all be exciting for your cat to play with!



Catnip

Not all cats respond to catnip, some respond by getting relaxed and others may respond by being overly aggressive in play. Many cats enjoy catnip filled toys to kick, rub, and carry. Catnip is not addictive, and is safe for your cat to roll in, play with, or ingest. Catnip can also be crushed and sprinkled on a bed or carpet for your cat to play in.

Scratching Posts

Cats need to scratch! This is important for nail maintenance. Having a scratching post will provide an outlet (other than your furniture) for your cat to use. A scratching post should be long enough for your cat to stretch out completely when scratching. It should be sturdy and stable enough that it won't wobble during use. The post should be covered in a rough material like sisal or burlap. We also recommend the cardboard scratching pads. You can sprinkle some catnip on the post to keep your cat interested in that spot!

Care and Handling

Your cat will need an annual visit to the vet for a wellness exam and updated vaccines. We recommend that cats are kept on a monthly flea preventative. Cats will need their nails trimmed every 2-3 weeks, which you can do at home or at a veterinarian's office.

If you need to pick up your cat you can place one hand behind their front legs and another behind their hindquarters. Lift gently and hold your cat close to your body to provide support. It is important not to pick up your cat by their scruff or front legs.

Training

What? Train my CAT? Yes! Training is a great way to bond with your cat and help them be comfortable for travel and veterinary care. Listed below are a few tips you can work on with your cats.

Recall

This is training your cat to come to you when you call. You can use their name, a special word or a specific sound. The training is simple:

1. Say your cat's name (or word or sound) and immediately provide a yummy treat.
2. Repeat 3 - 5 times per day, and in no time your cat will be coming when called!

Voluntarily climbing into a cat carrier

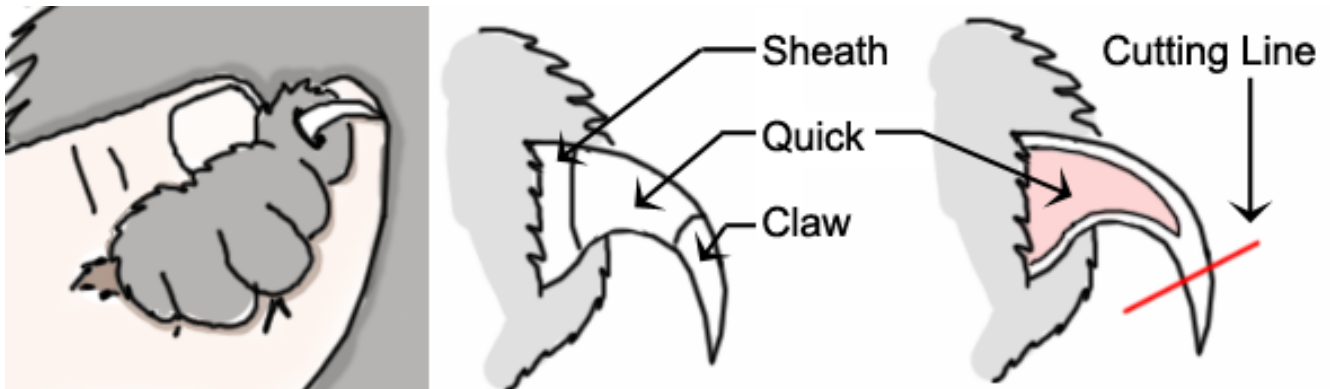
Many cats see a cat carrier and run the other way! Usually a carrier indicates the cat may have a scary experience on the horizon, like a car ride or trip to the vet. You can make the carrier a fun experience by interacting with it more often. Have your carrier out with a soft blanket inside to encourage it as a safe place to hide, or just part of the everyday furniture. You can feed your cat in the carrier or every so often provide an extra special treat in there.



Sitting still for nail trims

Nail trims can be a challenge when you have a wiggly cat. Here is a step by step approach to get your cat used to having their nails trimmed:

1. Get your cat used to being held and their paws being touched. We recommend pairing being held with your cat's favorite treat (like tuna!) Then you can also touch each paw individually, providing a treat after each one.
2. When your cat is used to being held and their paws touched, you can move on to practice gently pressing the paw pad so the nail extends. Provide frequent treats so the cat finds this experience to be pleasurable.
3. Once your cat is comfortable with you extending their nails, it's time to trim! Go slowly and provide a lot of treats during this process. It can be helpful to have two people, but you don't need to. It's ok if you can only get one nail or one paw done per session. It's better to go slow and let the cat have a good experience rather than rush through it.



For more information about training cats, we recommend the book *The Trainable Cat* by Dr. Sarah Ellis.

If you have any questions about your new cat's behavior, please let us know. We are happy to help make your transition successful!



Frequently Asked Cat Questions

What should I feed my cat? Wet or dry food? How often? Which brands?

Getting a new cat on a steady eating routine and diet can sometimes be a bit of trial & error. Different cats enjoy different foods, sometimes even different flavors of the same food. It's a good idea to start small, buy small bags of dry food and individual cans of wet food. See what your new feline friend enjoys the most, then invest in more of that. Most foods have recommendations written on their labels when it comes to how much and how often you should feed your cat. A balanced diet can include both wet and dry, though it's okay if your cat prefers one over the other.

How does the cat know how to find the litterbox?

Most cats instinctually know to use some form of sand/litter for eliminations from birth. Once they are shown where their litter box is, they are typically able to find it with ease and use it appropriately.

In rare instances, a cat, more often a kitten, may need a little extra help to sense where their box is. There are special brands of litter available that are scented to help attract cats to it, which will help them get used to where it's located. While a hidden and/or covered litter box may be more aesthetically pleasing, some cats may prefer an open-air box.

I'm adding a second cat to my home, should I get a male or female with male or female? Does it make a difference?

While there are many schools of thought regarding this, it typically boils down to the personalities of each individual cat. Males are often considered to be more friendly and energetic, while females more independent and meticulous. In truth, any friendly, outgoing cat has the potential to get along with other cats regardless of gender. Similarly, cats that are more dominant or aloof may have a harder time accepting another cat, male or female.

Will male cats spray?

On average, no, at least not once they're neutered. Un-neutered males may make a habit of spraying to mark their territory. Once fixed, however, it's rare for a male to spray, if ever.



Is this cat a mouser?

Many cats are born predators and do enjoy chasing down small prey. Whether they continue to do so depends on their upbringing and environment. Cats that are more independent and who enjoy fending for themselves in an indoor/outdoor living situation are more likely to still actively hunt for mice than an overly affectionate cat used to the comforts of the indoors. That's not to say they never will, it's just less likely.

Can this cat be indoor/outdoor? Just indoor?

Cats can be very happy living indoors only and, depending on where their new home is located, it may even be recommended. While residing at our facility, our cats remain indoors and do not have any outdoor time. However, if a cat has had a history of being on their own and/or living indoors/outdoors, they may be happiest continuing to do so. For those unsure about letting their cat roam free, a happy medium can be achieved with supervised visits outdoors, particularly with a harness.

Will they be snuggly? Will they be playful?

It's hard to accurately gauge the personality of every cat that spends time at our facility. After all, their behaviors and attitudes will change once they move from hectic shelter life to a new household. While we can theorize based on their behavior while in our care, they will only really show their true colors once they've become accustomed to their environment and the people around them. Encouraging and engaging with your new cat will help them to bond with you and make them more likely to enjoy time with you.

Will this new cat be a friend to my cat?

Cats are well known for their independence, but that doesn't mean they will never make friends with others. Slowly introducing your new cat to your resident cat will greatly increase the chance that they will get along and be willing to share the household. Depending on each cat's personality, they could become inseparable friends or merely tolerant one another's presence.

Local Veterinarians



**COMMUNITY
VETERINARY CLINIC**
at the Animal Welfare Society

46 Holland Road
Kennebunk, ME
207-292-2424

Acton Veterinary Clinic 470 Young's Ridge Road Acton, ME 207-477-8144	Casco Bay Veterinary Hospital 1052 Brighton Avenue Portland, ME 207-761-8033	Homeport Veterinary Practice 232 Arundel Road Kennebunkport, ME 207-967-2517	Post Road Veterinary Clinic 746 Post Road Wells, ME 207-646-7200	Veterinary Quick Care 180 Waterman Dr Millcreek Plaza South Portland, ME 207-809-9030
Alfred WaterboroVet Hospital 1251 Main Street Waterboro, ME 207-247-3100	The Cat Doctor 183 Brighton Avenue Portland, ME 207-874-2287	Jordan Bay Animal Hospital 1242 Roosevelt Trail Raymond, ME 207-655-3900	The Ridge Animal Hospital 78 Shaws Ridge Road Sanford, ME 207-324-9007	Vet & Rehab CTR of Cape Elizabeth 207 Ocean House Road Cape Elizabeth, ME 207-799-6952
Animal Hospital of Saco 838 Portland Rd Gorham, ME 207-494-8333	Cats on Call Hospital 256 US-1 Scarborough, ME 207-883-7000	Kennebunk Veterinary Clinic 149 Fletcher Street Kennebunk, ME 207-985-4277	Ross Corner Animal Wellness CTR 12 Newfield Road Shapleigh, ME 207-512-4166	Vet At Your Door Veterinary house call services Portland/Mid Coast/Southern Maine 207-699-2676
Animal Hospital of Saco 838 Portland Road Saco, ME 207-494-8333	Cumberland Animal Clinic 212 Greely Road Cumberland, ME 207-829-5078	Kittery Animal Hospital 195 State Road Kittery, ME 207-439-4158	Saco Veterinary Clinic 331 North Street Saco, ME 207-571-9580	Village Veterinary 11 York Street York, ME 207-351-1530
Animal Hospital of South Gorham 47 County Road Gorham, ME 207-839-8158	Down Maine Veterinary Clinic 89 Country Club Road Sanford, ME 207-324-4683	Lake Region Animal Hospital 554 Roosevelt Trail Windham, ME 207-892-7575	Sacopee Vet Clinic 142 Main Street Cornish, ME 207-625-8505	Wells Cat & Dog Hospital 418 Sanford Road Wells, ME 207-646-8323
Animal Surgery & Advocacy SVC 5 Storm Drive Windham, ME 207-893-8134	Edgewood Animal Hospital 181 State Street Gorham, ME 207-839-6558	Limerick Mills Animal Hospital 135 Elm Street Limerick, ME 207-793-4493	Salmon Falls Animal Hospital 25 Goodwin Street South Berwick, ME 207-384-2123	Westbrook Animal Hospital 189 Pride Street Westbrook, ME 207-797-4747
Annabessacook Veterinary Clinic 417 ME-135 Monmouth, ME 207-933-2165	Eliot Veterinary Hospital 1034 Goodwin Road Eliot, ME 207-748-1000	Lowell Road Vet Center 279 Lowell Rd Hudson, NH 603-882-8825	Scarborough Animal Hospital 129 US-1 Scarborough, ME 207-883-4412	Westside Animal Hospital 172 Gray Road Cumberland Center, ME 207-829-4090
Biddeford Animal Hospital 556 Elm Street Biddeford, ME 207-282-6390	Falmouth Veterinary 174 US Route 1 Falmouth, ME 207-781-4028	Lucky Pet Animal Hospital 21 Commercial Drive Berwick, ME 207-698-5225	Southern Maine Veterinary Care 1445 Alfred Road Lyman, ME 207-499-7244	York Animal Hospital 88 Route 1 York, ME 207-363-2964
Bedford Veterinary Medical CTR 246 NH-101 Bedford, NH 603-353-0123	Forest Avenue Veterinary Clinic 973 Forest Avenue Portland, ME 207-797-4840	Mann Memorial Clinic 1121 Portland Road Arundel, ME 207-985-4774	Standish Veterinary Hospital 22 Rose Lane Standish, ME 207-642-4999	York County Veterinary Hospital 20 Hill Road Arundel, ME 207-284-9911
Brackett Street Veterinary Clinic 192 Brackett Street Portland, ME 207-772-3385	Freeport Veterinary Hospital 4 Post Road Freeport, ME 207-865-3673	Milton Veterinary Clinic 285 White Mountain Hwy Milton, NH 603-652-9661	Stoneledge Animal Hospital 398 Bridgeton Road Westbrook, ME 207-797-4292	
Broadview Animal Hospital 134 Ten Rod Road Rochester, NH 603-335-2120	Great Brook Animal Care 1468 Carl Broggi Hwy Lebanon, ME 207-339-0700	Pine Point Animal Hospital 12 Pine Point Road Scarborough, ME 207-883-3301	Tender Touch Veterinary Hospital 336 Gorham Road Scarborough, ME 207-839-7456	
Cape Veterinary Clinic 391 Cottage Road South Portland, ME 207-799-2188	Hollis Veterinary Clinic 20 Little Falls Road Hollis, ME 207-929-8989	Piscataqua Animal Hospital 103 State Road Kittery, ME 207-439-2661	Topsham Veterinary Wellness CTR 10 Monument Place Topsham, ME 207-406-4468	