

NEW CAT-PARENT TIPS

CONGRATULATIONS !

You've decided to adopt a cat! Yours is a lifesaving decision that means the world to your new feline family member. With just a little preparation, you can help ensure that your new cat's transition from homeless to home is a smooth and rewarding experience for you both.

Remember that while some cats adjust to this big life change with ease, others might take a while to become familiar and relaxed in their new home, so be patient and give your new kitty a few days to settle in. If your cat was microchipped by the adoption agency, be sure to register his or her microchip to your own name and address. Even if your cat has a microchip be sure to place a collar and ID tag on your cat as soon as you get home.

THINGS TO BUY BEFORE BRINGING YOUR CAT HOME:

- Food and water bowls
- Treats
- Collar with ID tag
- Cat bed
- Cat toys
- Cat litter box
- Cat litter (To begin with, use the same kind of litter that the cat is used to)
- Scratching post

TIPS TO MAKE YOUR NEW CAT FEEL AT HOME:

FOOD, CLEAN, FRESH WATER AND A CLEAN LITTER TRAY:

Make sure that he or she has easy access to these essentials and can get to the food, water and litter tray without having to run past the dog or venture too far from the spot they may have chosen to settle as a safe spot while they get used to your home. It's a good idea to confine your new cat to one room for a few days, so be sure that's where the essentials are located. A bedroom that can be kept closed is perfect for this. It's also a good idea to provide some toys and a scratching post. Stroke your kitty and then stroke the scratching post so that the post will have your cat's scent on it. Other simple toys such as a cardboard box or a paper (not plastic!) bag with no handles (their heads can get stuck in the handles) – provide loads of entertainment and a place to hide for your new cat.

GIVE HER TIME TO ADJUST TO HER NEW HOME:

While some cats adjust to this move with little effort, others might take a while to become familiar and relaxed in their new home, so be patient and give your new kitty a few days to settle in. If he prefers to view the world from under the couch until he feels safe to venture out, allow him to have the space and time he needs. It's a good idea to provide plenty of hiding places, up high and at floor level, so your new cat has easy access to a safe spot. When your new cat is in hiding or watching things from a safe spot, it's important not to disturb her. She should feel that their hiding places are truly safe. This will help her to feel more confident more quickly.

INTERACTING WITH CHILDREN:

Kids love pets and it is natural for a child to want to hold your new cat, however, some cats don't like to be held, or might not want to be held when they first arrive home. If you have children or if you want a cat that enjoys curling up on your lap, be sure to check with the adoption agency that your new cat will enjoy such interactions before you adopt, and even then, go slowly.

DIET:

Cats eat less when they are stressed, and moving to a new home is stressful, so don't be surprised or concerned if food is ignored, especially while you are watching! However, if your new cat doesn't eat and drink overnight after everyone else has gone to bed, it might be a good idea to try some special canned food mixed with the dry. If you want to change your new cat's food to one that you prefer, wait a couple of days and then gradually begin to introduce your preferred food mixed with the food the cat is familiar with. Allow a few days, gradually feeding more of the new food and less of the old until the change is made. It is important for the health of your cat that you feed him a high-quality food. High-quality food doesn't have to be expensive. Check with a pet-supply store or with the adoption agency for suggestions.

Changing your cat's diet too rapidly can cause upset to his system (decreased appetite, vomiting, and/or diarrhea). If this happens, call your veterinarian or the adoption agency.

How often should you feed your cat? You can feed your cat once or twice a day, or you can leave food out all day – free feeding – although some (but not all) cats who are free-fed tend to be overweight, which is not good for their health. You might want to leave dry food available all day and then open a can of tasty wet food when you get home so that kitty will give you an extra special welcome when you walk through the door! For most cats, feeding twice a day is ideal.

It is also very, very important that you provide clean, fresh water for your cat. Change the water in the bowl twice a day and clean the bowl regularly. Cats need to drink plenty of water, especially if they eat mainly dry food, but they don't like to drink dirty water (who does!) and can easily dehydrate if their water is not clean.

LITTER TRAY:

Get a new, clean litter box for your cat. If you have a covered litter box, it's a good idea to leave it uncovered for a few days just in case your new kitty is not used to covered trays. Be sure to scoop the box every day and clean it completely as often as needed, but at least once every two weeks. Cats are very clean and don't like to use a smelly litter tray. When you clean the litter box, use a mild soap, not strong-smelling detergents or ammonia. Remember, if you don't like the smell of the litter box, your cat probably doesn't either; keep it clean and you'll have a happy cat.

INDOORS VS. OUTDOORS:

It is a fact that indoor-only cats live longer healthier lives, and we strongly recommend that cats are not allowed outside. However, if you plan to allow your cat to be an indoor/outdoor cat, here are a few things to keep in mind: Do not allow your cat to go outdoors for at least the first week to ten days or longer until you are certain that your new cat is happy and oriented. Also, make sure that he or she has easy access to your home through a cat door or open window. If you plan to allow your cat to go outside, be sure that the area is protected from dogs, traffic and even predatory wildlife such as large birds of prey and coyotes. If you have any questions about the best way to care for your new cat, call the agency where you adopted him or her or you can call or email one of the NKUT partner organizations that work with cats. They'll all be happy to help!