



Welcoming your new cat to the family home

So you have decided on a new feline friend and want to ensure you give them a successful transition into their new environment.

We need to ensure we provide them with the things they need to ensure they feel safe and secure and part of the family.

Hopefully, this leaflet will give you an insight into the do's and don'ts and help you feel more in control of this new chapter.



Settling In

- Ideally 72hrs prior to their arrival place Feliway Pheromone diffusers throughout the house. This will hopefully help them cope better with the change in the environment making them feel calm and at ease.
- Give the new cat a separate room which will contain all of the relevant resources – litter tray, food, water, hiding places, toys, scratching posts and vertical climbing space.

NB if you do have other pets in the house especially cats ensure that this isn't a favourite room for one of them as restricting access suddenly may cause that pet to feel anxious.

- If you have another cat ensure there is no visual access between the cats, so notify all members of the house that the door needs to remain closed at all times. (See later: Introducing a new cat to a resident cat)
- If your new feline friend is your only pet then let them have time every day to explore outside of this room. Ensure the door remains open so they can access this area if feeling worried. Return them to their area if you are going out or whilst you are sleeping.
- Once you feel your new cat seems at ease the door can remain open.



Environmental Enrichment

Cats need to feel that all their resources in their core territory are safe, whether it be from cats within the household or cats from outside.

- Ensure your cat is provided with all its vital environmental resources to include drinking, feeding, claw scratching, toileting, play, sleep, rest and hiding areas. It's important that we provide all their vital resources in easily accessible places.
- All resources should be separate and positioned in multiple locations, this is essential in multi-cat households at a ratio of 1 per cat + 1 extra.
- A cat should have a choice over resources and shouldn't feel any competition.
- Try and make use of vertical space inside and outside so the cats can have access to elevated areas. They often feel safer if up higher.
- Cats should be given opportunities to exhibit their natural prey and play behaviour. This can be achieved through toys, play interaction with owners and puzzle feeding games that allow the cat to actively gain their food.
- Ensure you are respectful of the cat's ability to smell and interpret the chemical signals around them. Avoid using heavily scented products around the house such as reed diffusers, scented candles, plug-ins or strong smelling perfume etc.
- Meeting the environmental needs of our cats is important to improve welfare and improve the relationship between us and our feline friends.



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Introduction to other pets: Cats

Cats learn about their environments through chemical communication and will recognise the 'goodies and baddies' from the scent deposited. Each cat has its own unique profile and they will deposit the pheromones from glands on their face, tail, feet and mammary area. The classic head rub image against the chair leg is actually a process of marking. The pheromones can act as a traffic light system - green = calm and familiar = go, red = potential threat is present = do not go.

- Initially, we need to create a common scent profile between your resident cat(s) and the new arrival.
- Take a small towel and rub each resident cat, then the new cat and leave in the new cat's room.
- Then repeat using the new cat first and then the resident cat(s) and leave the towel outside the room. Repeat at least several times a week for a few weeks.

NB Concentrate the rubbing on their face, back and tail, however, if any cat shows a dislike to this just stick to the face.

- With the door staying closed start to play with toys on either side of the door. You could use a piece of string/ribbon and attach a toy at each end allowing the cats to pull the string to and fro.
- Offer high-value food and treats each side of the door (the door must remain closed) to give them a positive association with what's the other side of the door.

NB Cats are solitary eaters so should NOT be fed in close proximity to others.

- Once you feel the new arrival is relaxed confine the other cats to an area of the house or outside to explore. Give the new cat a chance to explore other rooms. Then put the new cat back in its safe room and let the others back in. Carry on this process until you feel all cats are comfortable.
- After this step controlled, visual interaction can start, firstly through a barrier, screen, wire crate or being on a lead and harness.
- Ensure they are at a distance and offer a toy or high reward value treat. Keep sessions short up to 5 minutes.
- Have daily sessions ensuring no negative body language is expressed, (ears back, dilated pupils or hissing).
- Decrease the distance over time however remembering not allowing them to eat near to each other.
- If all has been going well then you can remove the barriers that are in place.
- If you notice any aggressive indicators (ears back, hissing) block their vision by placing a towel, blanket or pillow between them to end the session.

NB Never attempt to handle or pick up an aroused cat as they may redirect their aggression towards you.

- If the encounters remain negative then return back to the previous stage of non-visual introductions and start the visual encounter again after a few days.

NB Be mindful that any negative interaction can actually delay the process.

- If all going well and all parties seem accepting then increase the time the cats are in contact. Supervision may have to remain in place for a while and the door to the safe area must always remain open.

NB NEVER RUSH this stage, successful introductions can take months. Some cats may bond and become good friends however some may just learn to co-habit on each other's terms.

Introduction to other pets: Dogs

Although we think of cats and dogs as enemies they can actually become quite good pals. If the dog or cat has lived with the other species before it will hopefully make the situation less stressful (unless of course there have been issues previously).



- Ideally, a dog crate should be used with a box or covered area inside so the cat can hide. Position the cage away from the dog's resources.
- Exercise the dog first so that energy levels are reduced.
- Stroke both animals to exchange scents.
- Reward the dog for showing the calm behaviour you want.
- Use the cage set up in the living room in the evening and sit quietly watching TV so no great interest is shown, as all things are relaxed.
- Once no interest is shown the cage door can be opened.

NB The dog MUST be on a lead for this as we don't want the cat to be chased.

- Ensure there are elevated places for the cat to retreat to; window sills, shelves etc.
- Ensure the cat has access to all its resources without having to directly go past the dog.

NB Never leave the dog or cat alone together until you are happy they will be safe.

Human Interaction

Cats can become great companions and it is important that we respect their need to have friendly and predictable social interactions.

- Always let your cat initiate its contact with you and give the cat the control.
- Lower yourself to the cat and avoid fixed eye contact. Give the cat time to approach and allow them to sniff your hand.
- If they are acting favourably then proceed to gentle stroking on the head and around the cheeks.
- Always speak softly and calmly.
- If the cat chooses to end its interaction then allow it.

NB NEVER force interaction with a cat.

- If you have multi cats in the house ensure every cat has its own individual attention.
- If any young children are in the house ensure they are told the correct approach to a cat and try to teach them the signs of when a cat might be unhappy.
- Ensure you avoid playing with any body parts; toes, fingers or hair, all play should be directed with rod toys.

NB Do not leave young children unsupervised with any pet.

Sources:

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Thank you for taking the time to read this leaflet and I wish you many years of happiness with your new arrival.

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