

YOUR COMPLETE GUIDE TO CAT ADOPTION



**KEYS TO A HAPPY AND
SUCCESSFUL FOREVER HOME**

CAT ADOPTION GUIDE

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MEETING ADOPTABLE CATS



HERE'S A COMPLETE GUIDE FOR WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN MEETING ADOPTABLE CATS

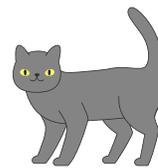
UPON ARRIVAL, PLEASE CHECK IN AT OUR FRONT DESK. AN ADOPTIONS COUNSELOR WILL PROVIDE FURTHER INSTRUCTIONS.

MEET LOCATIONS

Meets may take place in a meeting room or within the cattery section depending on the cats comfort level. Adoptions Counselors will direct you to the correct location upon check in.



BODY LANGUAGE



FRIENDLY



CAUTIOUS



ATTENTIVE



RELAXED



PLAYFUL



FRIGHTENED



TRUSTING

HOW TO GREET

- Allow the cat to approach first
- Do not make direct eye contact
- Offer a flat hand to sniff
- Adoptions Counselors will give further instructions



SHELTER CATS

Shelters are considered a high stress environment, so you may not see a cats **true personality** in this environment

Cats may be shut down or act out more than usual as a result of the stress



WHAT TO BRING

IF YOU HAVE BEEN ADVISED THAT THE CAT IS READY TO GO HOME PLEASE BRING:

- Properly sized carrier
- Towel or blanket to cover carrier during transport home

THINGS TO KNOW BEFORE THEY GO

HOW TO GET YOU AND YOUR HOME READY FOR YOUR NEW ADDITION



LITTER BOX

Cats need plenty of clean bathroom options that are **easily accessible** during the adjustment period.

- The rule of thumb is one litter box per cat, plus one extra.
- If you have multiple floors, place at least one box on every level of your home.
- Scoop daily and wash boxes regularly to keep your cat happy and healthy.

BABY-PROOFING YOUR HOME

- Keep small objects, strings, hair ties, and rubber bands out of reach—**cats may swallow them**.
- Secure cords, blinds, and anything that dangles.
- Double-check that windows and screens are secure to prevent escapes.
- Put away toxic plants and foods (like lilies, onions, garlic, chocolate).



VERTICAL SPACE & HIDING SPOTS

Cats feel **safer** and more **confident** when they can climb and observe their world from up high. Providing cat trees, wall shelves, or window perches gives them a safe way to explore and watch their environment.

Just as important, cats need cozy hiding places where they can **retreat and relax**.

- Cardboard boxes, covered beds, or even a blanket draped over a chair can give your cat a private “safe zone.”

WHAT TO BUY

REMEMBER THAT THESE SUGGESTIONS ARE TO START. MORE ITEMS WILL LIKELY BE REQUIRED THROUGHOUT THEIR LIVES

- Litter Boxes
- Litter
- Food Bowl
- Water Bowl
- Treats
- Cat Carrier
- Toys
- Bed or Blanket
- Food, according to age and size



For additional resources, please visit www.ycspca.org/adoption-resources

TIPS FOR BRINGING A SHELTER CAT HOME

AT FIRST, KEEP YOUR CAT SEPARATED

Please keep your new cat separated in their own room for at least 10 - 14 days. A spare bedroom, bathroom, or the laundry room are all great options. Make sure that the cat knows where their food, water, and litterbox are. To make the transition easier, use Feliway to calm your new cat or Cat Attract to attract cats and kittens to use the litter pan.



INTRODUCTION TO YOUR OTHER PETS

When first introducing your new cat to other animals in the home, baby gates can be a useful tool. This way, they can see but not get to each other to become familiar. Scent swapping is another way to help your animals acclimate to each other. Try exchanging towels, blankets, or beds so they can get used to each other's scent. It is also helpful for cats that are shy or leierier of people, to leave something with your scent on it with them such as an article of clothing that has been worn.



GETTING USED TO YOUR PRESENCE

Let your new cat get used to your presence by coexisting with them. Reading out loud while in the room is a good way to acclimate the cat to you. If they hide, please do not pull them out. Go to them, or let them come to you. Patience is key.



EXPLORING THE REST OF THE HOUSE

Eventually, your cat will be ready to explore the rest of the house after initially settling in. Some ways to know that your new cat is ready to be introduced to the whole house are if they are greeting you when you enter the room and if they are no longer hiding, seeming comfortable in the new space.



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IT DOESN'T HAPPEN OVERNIGHT

THE 3-3-3 RULE

The **3-3-3 rule** is a general guideline for a cat's adjustment after adoption. Every animal is **unique** and will adjust to their forever home **differently**.



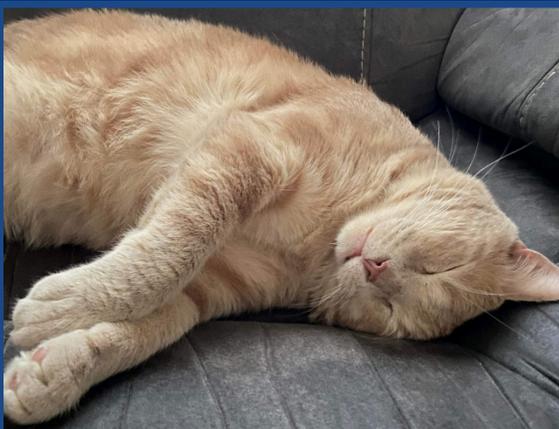
3 DAYS: TO DECOMPRESS

- Feels overwhelmed
- Scared or unsure of what's going on
- Not comfortable enough to be themselves
- May not want to eat or drink
- Shuts down and/or hides
- Tests boundaries



3 WEEKS: TO LEARN YOUR ROUTINE

- Begins to show true personality
- Learns their environment
- Starts to feel more comfortable
- Behavior issues may start to appear
- Routine begins to take shape
- Realizes this could be their forever home



3 MONTHS: TO FEEL AT HOME

- Finally feeling completely comfortable
- Comfortable routine established
- Begins to build trust and a true bond
- Gains a complete sense of security with new family

BOREDOM BUSTERS

EXERCISE OF THE MIND: ENRICHMENT ACTIVITIES

WHAT IS ENRICHMENT?

Enrichment involves activities and changes to your cat's environment that challenge their mind, body, and senses. The goal is to reduce boredom, prevent destructive behaviors, and help your cat thrive in their new home.

DIFFERENT TYPES OF TOYS

Enrichment toys are designed to make your cat work for their food or treats, stimulating your cat's brain. They also give cats safe ways to express natural instincts.

1. **Wand Toys:** Great for interactive play. Move the toy like prey—fast, slow, hiding, darting. End the game by letting them “catch” it to avoid frustration.
2. **Puzzle Feeders:** Toys or bowls that make cats use their paws or nose to get kibble. Slows down eating and adds mental stimulation.
3. **Licki Mats:** Flat textured mats that you can spread with wet food or treats like plain tuna juice or a lick-safe paste. Helps calm cats, provides sensory enrichment, and makes mealtime last longer.
4. **Snuffle Mats:** Fabric mats where kibble or treats can be hidden for cats to sniff out, encouraging natural foraging. Great for slowing down fast eaters.
5. **Treat Balls:** Balls with a hole that drop food as they roll them around.
6. **Small toys (mice, balls, plushies, or even battery-powered moving toys):** Many cats enjoy batting them around, chasing them, or carrying them in their mouths like captured prey. If using electronic or battery-operated toys, supervise playtime and put them away afterward to prevent chewing on cords or small parts.

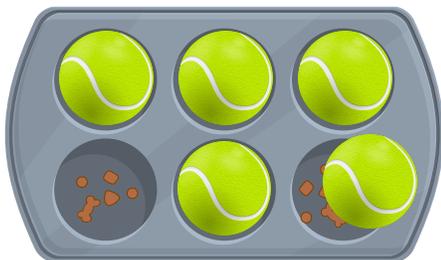
SOCIAL ENRICHMENT

Bonding time is just as important as toys and play.

1. **Petting and Grooming:** Many cats enjoy brushing—it mimics social grooming and reduces shedding. Always let your cat guide how much contact they want.
2. **Clicker Training:** Yes, cats can learn tricks! Teaching “sit,” “high-five,” or “come” keeps their brains busy and strengthens your relationship.
3. **Reading or Talking to:** Sitting calmly and reading or talking in a soft voice helps shy or nervous cats acclimate to human presence without pressure.



DIY ACTIVITIES

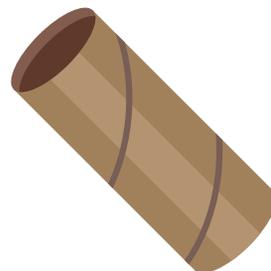


MUFFIN TIN PUZZLE

- **Materials:** Muffin tin, tennis balls, cat treats or kibble.
- **How to:** Place treats or kibble in the cups of a muffin tin, and cover them with tennis balls or crumpled paper. Your cat will need to figure out how to remove the balls to get to the treats underneath.

TOILET PAPER OR PAPER TOWEL TUBES

- **Materials:** Empty toilet paper or paper towel roll, kibble or treats
- **How to:** Place a few pieces of kibble or treats inside the tube, fold the ends closed, and give it to your cat to roll and paw at until they get the food out.



SCENTED ICE CUBES

- **Materials:** Ice cube tray, water, tuna juice, chicken broth (unsalted, no onion/garlic), or a bit of wet food
- **How to:** Fill an ice cube tray with water or broth. Add a piece of kibble or treat to each section. Freeze and give a cube as a cool treat or food puzzle.

CATNIP SOCK TOY

- **Materials:** Sock, Catnip
- **How to:** Fill a clean sock with dried catnip and tie a knot at the end. You can also add crinkle paper inside for extra texture. Many cats enjoy the stimulating effect of catnip—it encourages play, rolling, and kicking.



By incorporating these activities, you'll help your new cat settle into their home while providing plenty of fun, stimulation, and bonding opportunities. Enjoy the process and celebrate the small victories along the way!



ALTERNATIVES TO DECLAWING

KEEPING CATS HAPPY & FURNITURE SAFE

WHAT IS DECLAWING?

Declawing is not just removing a cat's nails—it is an amputation of the last bone of each toe. It can cause pain, long-term behavior problems, and mobility issues. The good news is, there are many safe and humane ways to protect both your cat and your home!

WHY CATS SCRATCH

- To **stretch and exercise** their muscles.
- To **mark territory** (both visually and with scent glands in their paws).
- To **relieve stress and boredom**.
- To **shed old claw sheaths** and keep nails healthy.

Scratching is **normal and necessary**—the key is giving your cat the right outlets.

ALTERNATIVES

SCRATCHING POSTS & PADS

- Offer a variety: vertical and horizontal
- Place them near favorite resting spots, windows, or furniture they like to scratch.
- Tip: Rub catnip or treats on posts to encourage use.

NAIL CAPS

- Soft, rubbery caps that fit over the cat's nails.
- They are safe, painless, and prevent damage from scratching.
- Must be replaced every 4–6 weeks as nails grow.

NAIL TRIMMING

- Trim your cat's nails every 2–3 weeks.
- Use a pet nail clipper and only trim the sharp tip.
- Start slow, reward with treats, and keep it positive.

FURNITURE PROTECTION

- Use double-sided tape or furniture-safe scratch deterrent tape on problem areas. Cats dislike sticky surfaces.
- Provide scratchers nearby as an alternative.
- Use washable covers or slipcovers on favorite scratching spots during training.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Declawing takes away an important part of your cat's natural behavior and defense system. Scratching is a normal, healthy behavior. With the right tools and training, you can protect your home and give your cat what they need—without declawing.

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INTRODUCING CATS

PREPARING SEPARATE SPACES

Before you introduce your cat with your new cat, it's crucial to create separate spaces for each of them. This gives them a sense of security and helps prevent stress during the initial stages of their introduction.

- **Suggestions for the Space**
 - A quiet enclosed room that includes basic necessities (litter box, water, food, etc.)
 - High perches and/or hiding spots such as trees, shelves or hidey huts

SCENT SWAPPING

Animals first become familiar with each other through scent. Scent swapping allows them to adjust to each other's smell prior to meeting face-to-face.

- Swap bedding
- Place the animal's belongings in the other animal's space
- Use a cloth to gently rub both the cats. Place the scent on the other pet's territory.



Doorway Introduction

- Feed both cats on opposite sides of a closed door so they connect the new presence with something positive (mealtime!).
- You may hear hissing or growling—this is normal. With time, they should start to eat calmly.

PHYSICAL INTRODUCTION

Once both cats are comfortable with scents, allow them to see each other through a barrier like a baby gate, screen door, or cracked door. Keep sessions short and positive, offering treats or playtime. Gradually increase the duration over several days.



SLOW IS THE WAY TO GO

- Allow short face-to-face meetings in a controlled space after calm barrier introductions.
- End on a good note—even a few minutes of calm behavior is progress!

PATIENCE AND GRADUAL INTRODUCTIONS ARE KEY TO A SUCCESSFUL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN YOUR CATS.



INTRODUCING DOGS AND CATS

PREPARING SEPARATE SPACES

Before you introduce your dog and cat, it's crucial to create separate spaces for each of them. This gives them a sense of security and helps prevent stress during the initial stages of their introduction.

- **Suggestions for Cats**
 - A quiet enclosed room that includes basic necessities (litter box, water, food, etc.)
 - High perches and/or hiding spots such as trees, shelves or hidey huts
- **Suggestions for Dogs**
 - A designated area or room for the dog to stay in. This can be a crate, a playpen, or separate room
 - Comfort items such as a comfy bed and their favorite toys

SCENT SWAPPING

Animals first become familiar with each other through scent. Scent swapping allows them to adjust to each other's smell prior to meeting face-to-face.

- Swap bedding
- Place the animal's belongings in the other animal's space
- Use a cloth to gently rub both the dog and the cat. Place the scent on the other pet's territory.



PHYSICAL INTRODUCTION

When officially introducing the dog and cat, do so in a neutral space where neither animal feels territorial. Keep the dog on a leash and utilize a physical barrier such as a baby gate. Make sure the cat has a safe spot (e.g., high perch or hiding place) to retreat to if they feel threatened.



SLOW IS THE WAY TO GO

- Increase the length of the sessions over time, ensuring each interaction is positive
- Keep the dog on a leash for safety and reward both pets with treats for calm behavior

PATIENCE AND GRADUAL INTRODUCTIONS ARE KEY TO A SUCCESSFUL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN YOUR DOG AND CAT.

