



New Cat Guide

Essentials Checklist

Bringing a new cat home? First things first. Use the following checklist to make sure you are prepared from day one:

- Cat litter, litter box, and scoop
- High-quality cat food
- Scratching post (at least 3' tall and sturdy) or scratching pad
- Food and water dishes
- Interactive toys (i.e. feather wands, etc.)
- Brush, comb and nail clippers
- Cat bed or a box with a warm, clean towel or blanket
- Cat carrier

Adjusting to a New Environment

Your new family member will need time to adjust to her new surroundings. Create a safe haven for her with a cat bed, plastic carrier with the door removed, or cardboard box, located in a small room.

If you have other cats, your new cat may need to be kept apart from them for 10 to 14 days to allow time for a check-up, deworming, and to be spayed/neutered. This also allows your new cat and resident cat(s) time to get used to each other's scent and presence. Be aware that developing new friendships among cats can take time, even as long as a month.

Most importantly, let your cat set the pace. Be patient and give her time to adjust to her new surroundings. With time, she'll feel right at home.

Litter Box Logic

Training a kitten to use the litter box is relatively easy and quick. Of course, as in any training situation, consistency and patience will make the process smoother.

Place your kitten in the litter box upon awaking, after meals, and just before bed. The first few trips to the box may require some encouragement. Show her what to do by gently rotating her shoulders and making her paws scratch in the cat litter. Eventually, instinct will take over.

The litter box should be located in a quiet, easily accessible location—a bathroom or utility room usually works well. In a multi-level home, one box per floor is recommended. Avoid moving the litter box. If you must move it, do so gradually, moving it a few inches each day so you do not confuse your cat.

The most important thing to remember is that cats will not use a messy or smelly litter box, so keep it as clean as possible. Scoop out solids once a day. When needed, dump all of the contents into the trash and wash the box with soap and water (not ammonia). Dispose of used litter in the trash. Do not flush clay-based or crystal litter.

Feeding Facts

Kittens: Kittens between six to 12 weeks should be fed specially formulated kitten food four times a day and those between three and six months, three times a day. Do not overfeed and avoid giving human food. Fresh water should be available to your kitten all day. Cow's milk is unnecessary and could cause an upset stomach and diarrhea.

Cats: It's best to feed your cat a nutritious cat food twice a day, according to the package label, and throw away leftover canned food after 30 minutes. Alternatively, you can free-feed your cat dry food, which can be left out. Fresh water should be available to your cat all day. Cow's milk is unnecessary and could cause an upset stomach and diarrhea.

Grooming

Coat: While cats spend considerable time grooming themselves, additional brushing will keep your cat's coat shiny, and reduce shedding and the development of hairballs. The type of coat and season of the year will determine whether your cat needs daily or weekly brushings.

Nails: Cats need to scratch to shed small nail casings. A sturdy scratching post allows your cat to scratch and mark with his nails, keeps him active, and distracts him from scratching furniture. You may need to show your kitty how to use the scratching post at first, until he gets used to it. Additionally, trimming your cat's nails every two to three weeks keeps them relatively blunt.

Safety in the Home

Cats are curious, playful creatures—qualities that can get them in serious trouble. Take these basic precautions to keep your cat safe and happy:

- Block off nooks and crannies that are dangerous for cats to explore—e.g., under large appliances, behind furniture, and in basement crawl spaces.
- Remove small sharp objects, such as loose thumbtacks, from floors and tabletops.
- Tape electrical cords to baseboards and install plug covers on unused electrical outlets.
- Place breakables and plants that are poisonous to cats—e.g., ivy, philodendron, dracaenas, lillies—out of reach.
- Keep your cat inside. If you must let them outside, build a backyard cat enclosure or add a fence topper that will prevent your cat from climbing out.
- If your cat does go outdoors, have her vaccinated for feline leukemia virus, rabies, panleukopenia, rhinotracheitis and calici.
- Put a safety collar on your cat with a tag listing your name and phone number.

The Importance of Playtime

Cats need daily stimulation. Luckily, they're easily entertained by almost anything. Providing your cats with toys—store-bought or homemade—keeps them engaged and distracts them from playing with household items you'd like to keep intact.

The best playtime, of course, will be the time you spend playing together. Just refrain from using your hands or fingers as play objects, as you don't want to encourage biting or scratching habits.

Always put away interactive toys when playtime is over. They may have parts that are unsafe for cats to ingest. Never allow your cat to play with yarn, string, ribbon or Christmas tree tinsel. They may become lodged under the tongue or in the stomach or intestines, creating serious problems and possibly leading to death.

Health Help

Take your new cat to a veterinarian within 48 hours after coming home—no matter where she was obtained. After the initial check-up, return to your vet at least once a year for an examination and shots.

Spaying or neutering your cat is recommended. It decreases aggressive behavior and urine spraying in male cats and helps prevent breast cancer in female cats. Keep in mind that an unspayed female cat can breed up to three times a year.

Consult your vet if you notice anything unusual, including:

- Persistent vomiting or diarrhea
- Refusal to eat for a period longer than 24 hours
- The presence of blood in the litter box, or above average usage of the litter box or a strain in urinating
- Regular eating of the cat litter
- Nose/eye discharge and sneezing
- Abnormally aggressive behavior

For more information about raising a happy, healthy cat, please contact: **ASPCA**

ASPCA National Animal Poison Control Center (NAPCC) at
1-888-4ANI-HELP or www.napcc.aspca.org. Consultation fee applies for phone help line.