

Cat Adoption Packet



Important Information for Adopters of Cats and Kittens



**BERKELEY
HUMANE**

saving friends since 1927



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Berkeley Humane offers lifetime post-adoption support and advice

CONGRATULATIONS ON YOUR NEW CAT!

We know how exciting it is to add a new cat to your family! Please remember that your cat is excited too, but may also be feeling some stress amidst all the change. Her whole life is changing as she all of a sudden has a brand new family and home. Consider introducing her to her new family members one at a time. It will ease her transition if you give your cat a few days to relax and get used to her new routine before inviting your friends over to meet her.

Cats are creatures of habit and tend to become stressed as a result of change. Allow your cat to adjust to your home gradually, and do not be surprised if she spends the first few days or weeks hiding. Remember that if she is allowed to hide and come out at her own pace, she is doing what she needs to feel safe and will be happier in your home as a result.



COMMITMENT

Indoor cats can live 16-20 years or even longer. Your commitment to being a loving and responsible cat owner for the rest of your cat's life includes:

- Providing good food, clean water, medical care, a safe and comfortable environment, and appropriate exercise and stimulation.
- Complying with state and local ordinances related to keeping a cat.
- Registering your cat's microchip with your contact information, and updating it any time your contact information changes.
- Taking your cat with you when you move.
- Addressing any behavior or health issues that arise in a humane and timely manner.

RETURNS

It is our hope that your new cat will remain in your home for the rest of her life. We are always available to help you with any concerns you may have, and we hope you will utilize this help before making the decision to return your cat. If you are unable to keep your cat, Berkeley Humane accepts returns of animals adopted from our shelter by appointment.

Berkeley Humane offers lifetime post-adoption support. If an issue arises with your cat, please contact us for advice as early as possible. We strive to help animals stay in their homes, but we recognize that sometimes this is simply not possible. Please understand that returns are very stressful on cats and should be considered a last resort.

We do not refund any adoption fees, and disposition of all animals is at the sole discretion of Berkeley Humane.



TRANSITIONING TO HOME

While your cat's transition to living in your home is a good thing, it can also be a source of stress and anxiety for her, which can weaken her immune system. As a result, viruses already present in your cat's system may cause her to become ill within the coming 1-2 weeks.

Berkeley Humane examines all cats when they arrive to determine overall health. Any pre-existing or chronic medical conditions are explained to you at the time of adoption. However, certain ailments may not show symptoms until your cat is home. Furthermore, the stress of transition can cause symptoms with no underlying illness.

- **DIARRHEA** is a symptom of a wide variety of conditions. It is most often caused by stress or new food, but if your cat has diarrhea that persists for more than three days or has blood in it, please call a veterinarian.
- **SNEEZING, COUGHING, AND DISCHARGE FROM NOSE AND/OR EYES** may be symptoms of an Upper Respiratory Infection (URI). The first and most persistent symptom is sneezing and coughing. As the infection progresses, you may also see discharge from the nose and/or eyes. This discharge may start off clear and then turn yellow or green.
- **LETHARGY AND LOSS OF APPETITE** that persist for more than two days or are accompanied by diarrhea, sneezing, coughing and nasal or eye discharge could indicate URI.
- **HAIR LOSS** is a symptom of a wide variety of conditions. The most common cause of hair loss in cats from a shelter is ringworm. Ringworm is a fungus that causes round, circular, hairless, and crusty lesions that can appear on any part of a cat's body. Ringworm can be contagious to humans, so it is important that you take your cat to the veterinarian right away if she has symptoms.

CONFINEMENT

Confine your new cat to one room in your home to give her time to adjust and gain confidence in this new setting. Put all of her supplies in this one room, and shut the door so she can't get out. **Be prepared to give your cat a week or more in this one room before she sees the rest of your home.** Shy or older cats may need more time to adjust. When your cat is comfortable she'll show you by coming out of hiding, sniffing or pawing at the door, or trying to dart past you when you open the door.

Open the door to your cat's room and let her explore. Over the course of a week, begin opening up the rest of your home for her to explore at her pace.



EXPENSE

Your new cat will rely on you for everything. Berkeley Humane estimates the yearly cost of caring for a cat after the first year to be anywhere from \$350 - \$1000+. Sudden illness or injury can require very expensive veterinary visits, so make sure that you are financially prepared for the unexpected. Pet insurance or a pet-specific savings account can help with some of these expenses. Berkeley Humane offers a free 30 day pet insurance trial through 24 PetWatch when you adopt.

SUPPLIES

Essential supplies for a new cat are:

- Break-away collar and ID tags for safety
- Litter box, scooper, cat litter
- High-quality cat/kitten food
- Scratching post or pad
- A variety of toys for play and exercise

SOCIALIZATION

Cats rely on others to learn, aided by play and exploration. Pet your cat often and make sure to touch her paws, ears, and face. This will help for future nail trims and if she needs medicine. If your cat is resistant to touch, do not force her to endure more handling than she is comfortable with. Gradually increase the length of time that you pet her, while always stopping before she becomes agitated. Make the presence of strangers a positive experience for your cat. Do not allow guests to grab or chase your cat if she seems uncomfortable, but do encourage them to give her treats, play with her using interactive toys, and pet/hold her if she is comfortable.

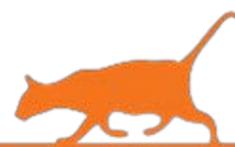
STIMULATION

Housecats require stimulation to keep their minds and bodies healthy. Be sure that you are playing with your cat (of any age) often. Adult and senior cats who are unenthusiastic about toys still benefit psychologically from watching feathers be dragged across the floor, even if they do not feel the need to actually “hunt” the toy. If given the option, most cats will become more interested in play over time. Play mimics hunting, which is a key component of feline instinct.

Cats love windows! Make sure that your cat has at least one spot to perch near a window and observe the world going by.

Cats are built to climb and enjoy doing so. Give them appropriate places to climb and perch. A variety of “cat trees” are the simplest way to achieve this. Most cat trees also include scratching posts and perches, which will give your cat a place to feel safe and identify as her own.

Entertainment for your cat does not need to be expensive or fancy. For example, leaving a packing box out with a few toys in it can provide your cat hours of entertainment. Once she has lost interest you can move the box to another room, flip it on its side, and watch her become enthralled with it all over again!



The more your cat is stimulated in an appropriate manner, the less likely she is to:

- Be overly active at night
- Scratch inappropriately
- Spray or urinate/defecate outside of the litterbox
- Bite or scratch
- Hypervocalize (meow excessively)
- Attempt to escape
- Be destructive to property

POST-ADOPTION VETERINARY CARE

Berkeley Humane's veterinary clinic exclusively serves animals under our care and is not currently open to the public. However, we are able to provide seven days of complimentary veterinary care for the following common ailments:

- Upper Respiratory Infection
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Common Infections or Skin Disorders
- Failure to urinate for more than 24 hours
- Suture Reactions, Seromas, or Incision Complications
- Suture Removals

Post-adoption veterinary visits are available Tuesdays - Fridays by appointment only. Please email out vet, Dr. Crystal Heath, at cheath@berkeleyhumane.org to report the symptoms and schedule an appointment.

Within the first week, bring your cat to the veterinary clinic to intend to use consistently in the future. Even if your cat is indoor-only, she will still require an annual exam by a licensed veterinarian and age-appropriate vaccinations. Depending on age and health, some cats will need an increased frequency of veterinary care.



COMMON SIGNS OF FELINE ILLNESS

Please take your cat to the veterinarian if you notice these signs of illness:

- Weight loss or gain
- Increased appetite, drinking or urination
- Reluctance to jump or be active
- Limping
- Loss of appetite
- Bad breath or drooling
- Thinning of hair or coat
- Coughing or sneezing
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Skin irritation or growth
- Sudden change in temperament
- Litter box 'accidents'

VACCINES AND FLEA TREATMENT

Berkeley Humane vaccinates cats with the following vaccines:

- **FVRCP:** Protects against Herpesvirus-1 (Rhinotracheitis), Calicivirus, Panleukopenia
- **Rabies:** (cats over 4 months) Protects against Rabies virus

Adopters of young kittens will need to finish their new kittens' vaccination schedule for the year, including the Rabies vaccine at 4 months old.

Berkeley Humane regularly applies Advantage Multi to all animals within our care, as there is a higher number of fleas in a shelter environment. If your cat will be allowed outside, we recommend applying a once-monthly topical flea preventative. If your cat will remain indoor-only, it is only necessary to provide preventative flea treatment if you or your veterinarian deem it preferable. However, if a flea preventative is not being regularly used, check your cat's coat for fleas daily and have a supply of topical flea treatment which will kill fleas instantly.



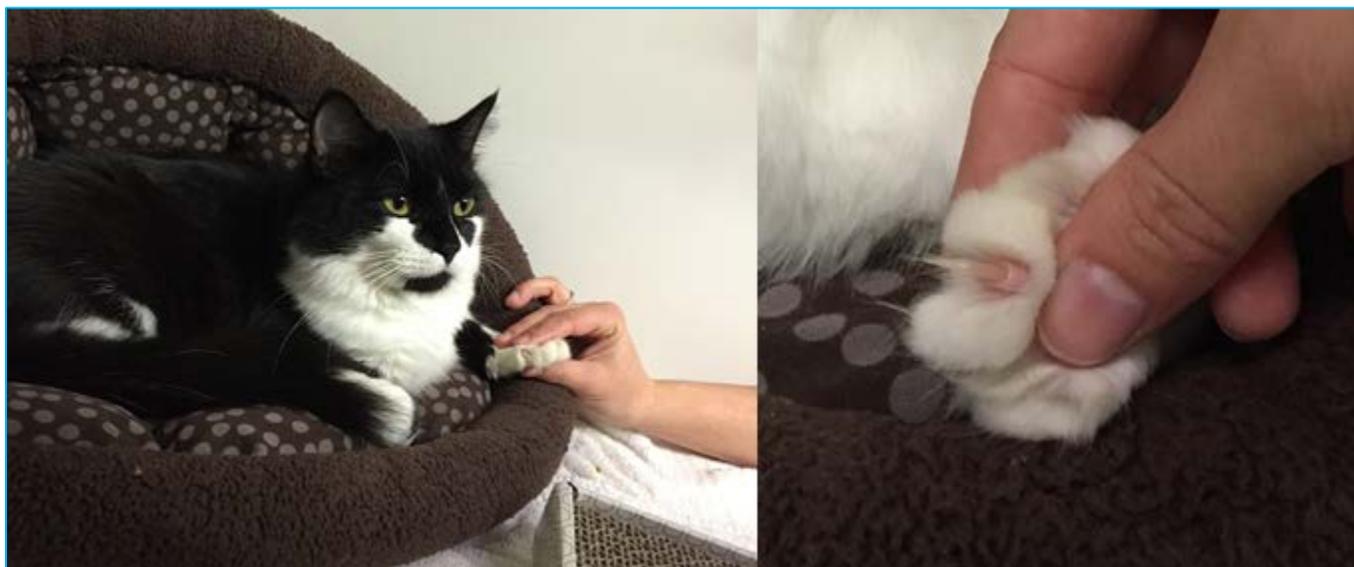
GROOMING

Most cats groom themselves regularly, but we recommend regular brushing to maintain a healthy coat. Cats with medium or long fur can develop painful mats, especially behind their ears, if they aren't brushed regularly. Grooming also includes trimming your cat's nails and providing dental treats such as Greenies, or brushing her teeth with a cat-specific toothbrush and toothpaste.

Nail trimming should not be a stressful experience for you or your cat. Help your cat feel comfortable with having her paws and nails touched by desensitizing her to this type of handling. When she is happy and relaxed, touch her paws gently and gradually extend the length of time you are doing so. Over time, she should be comfortable with the sensation of having her claws exposed and clipped.

Cat claws retract into the paw when not in use. To extend the claw, *gently* squeeze the paw by pressing on the paw pad and top of the paw. This will cause the claw to be exposed. Carefully trim the end of the claw with nail clippers or small animal claw clippers. Be sure that you are not clipping the pink flesh within the nail, called the quick.

If you or your cat are not comfortable with the nail clipping process, have it done by a veterinary or grooming professional for a low fee.



LITTERBOXES

Cats are very clean animals. They have 200 million odor-sensitive cells in their noses (humans have about 2% of that number), which means that they are incredibly sensitive to the smell of their litter boxes. To ensure that the litter box is clean enough for your cat, we recommend scooping the box daily and changing the litter completely every few weeks.

The litter box should be easy for your cat to find, and not directly adjacent to her food and water. To avoid confusion, avoid moving the litterbox too often. If you have to move it, do so gradually. It's easiest to place a second litter box in the new location and take the old box away only after she consistently uses the new one.

You may find that you need more than one litter box. If you have more than one cat, you will certainly need more. (Please see the section on multi-cat households.) If you have a large home where your cat may have trouble making it to only one litter box, or if your cat is having trouble using the box consistently, you may need to add a second litter box. Some cats prefer having options, even if they only actively use one.

TYPE OF BOX

Most cats are willing to use any style of litterbox. Make sure that it is large enough for your cat to comfortably fit inside of, or you will risk her “missing” the box even though she is attempting to use it. Covered litterboxes are appealing for smell prevention, and many cats prefer having a covered space to use. Because of space constrictions, Berkeley Humane does not use covered litterboxes. If you would like to transition your cat to this type of litterbox, leave it uncovered for a week or two so that she does not become confused as to its purpose. Make sure that she knows how to get in and out of it once the cover is placed on.



REFUSAL TO USE THE LITTER BOX

Health problems, such as urinary tract infections, are a common reason for cats to not use their litter boxes. Take your cat to the veterinarian if he is consistently urinating or defecating outside of the litter box. Refusal to use a litter box may also be caused by litter preference, box cleanliness, inability to get into the box, being bullied by another cat in your household, litter box placement, or a number of other factors. If you've ruled out these factors and your cat is still missing the box, please call us. Be sure to clean soiled areas thoroughly with an enzyme cleaner to eliminate offensive odors and reduce the chance of your cat returning to that area.

The first step (after ruling out medical causes) to determining why your cat is not using the litterbox involves experimenting by variety. Purchase additional litterboxes which can be used while you troubleshoot this issue. Once your cat has resumed regular use of the litterbox, you can most likely reduce the number of litterboxes. Experiment with the size and shape of the box, type of litter used, and box placement.

If there is a specific area that your cat is using instead of the litterbox, do what you can to keep her away from that spot, or make it less appealing. A shower curtain or tarp draped over a spot which a cat is using to relieve herself will change the surface. Cats, being very clean creatures, do not like relieving themselves on surfaces which risk splashing back up at them.

If your cat is urinating near a door, window, or other threshold to your house, she may feel that her territory is being threatened. Sometimes it is impossible to determine why a cat may suddenly feel territorial, because this can be sparked by very subtle events. For example, if your cat views a strange animal across the street from her window perch, it could cause her to feel threatened. Try putting a scratching post near the location which she is inappropriately urinating. Cats release pheromones through the pads of their paws when they scratch, so the scratching post will give her an appropriate outlet to assert her territory.



TRAINING YOUR CAT

Cats learn by experience. In a cat’s mind, positive experiences are generally repeatable while negative experiences are to be avoided. Unfortunately, people often unintentionally reward their cat’s bad behavior by reprimanding them. Reprimands are often viewed by attention-seeking cats as a reward—they did something that got your attention! An attention-seeking cat may not care whether you are petting them or scolding them. Furthermore, shy cats will simply choose to avoid YOU, not the behavior. Cats are frequently unable to distinguish the particular behavior which is causing them to be scolded. If a cat is able to draw this connection, she will be smart enough to realize she can get away with it when you are not around.

The goal of cat training is to make your cat’s undesirable behaviors result in negative experiences on their own—without you doing the reprimanding—so that your cat will choose to avoid them. Below are some common cat behavior issues and tips on making them unpleasant enough that your cat will likely choose to avoid the behavior in the future.

HYPERVOCALIZATION (MEOWING TOO MUCH)

WHY CATS DO IT:

Some breeds, like Burmese and Siamese cats, are naturally more “chatty” than others. Additional reasons for hypervocalization include medical issues, attention seeking, sudden changes, hunger, pain, situational anxiety, fear (such as a car ride), or energy release.

- Determine why your cat is vocalizing and if it is excessive for the situation or cat. Normal vocalization for a Siamese cat may be excessive for a Domestic Shorthair, just as an overreaction to life in a quiet living room may be an appropriate reaction for a cat stuck in a closet.
- **Hypervocalization can be caused by medical issues, particularly in older cats. Excessive meowing is a common symptom of an overactive thyroid or kidney disease. Rule out any medical cause before seeking a behavioral approach.**
- Attention-seeking is the most common reason for hypervocalization. Cats meow for something and humans respond—either by giving food, attention, or a verbal response. So cats learn that this behavior yields positive results, and they continue the behavior. Learn to give attention to your cat ONLY when she is quiet. This is very difficult for cat guardians to do! Attention-seeking meowing should be consciously *ignored*. Keep in mind that if the cat has been rewarded for meowing in the past, the behavior may get worse before it gets better.



EATING HOUSEPLANTS

WHY CATS DO IT:

There are several theories, and very few actual facts, on why cats eat plants. Some theorize that plants serve as kitty fiber supplements or a natural emetic (vomit-inducer).

- Do not keep toxic plants (see the section call “Poisons and Toxins List”) unless you can be certain that your cat will never be able to reach them.
- Provide cat grass to re-direct behavior.
- Place your houseplants in cat-proof places or use a deterrent such as adding mothballs or spraying the plant with a citrus smell.

NOCTURNAL ACTIVITY

WHY CATS DO IT:

By nature, cats are most active at dawn and dusk. Cats are predators who hunt critters that are awake at these hours, so it is very natural for them to get up during the night.

- Do not reinforce this behavior with any kind of attention (including negative attention).
- Provide your cat with as much daytime exercise and activity as possible—if you don’t, she will likely spend the entire day sleeping.
- Provide opportunities to be active early in the evening and give her enough time afterwards to settle down for sleep.
- If you provide a consistent schedule, most cats can learn to readjust their natural body clocks within a few weeks.
- If your cat continues to be active at night, it may be necessary to keep her in a contained area while you sleep. Keep in mind that as she grows older, she will likely reduce her nocturnal activity and can be invited back into your room.

CLIMBING ON THE KITCHEN COUNTER

WHY CATS DO IT:

Cats naturally prefer a three-dimensional environment and love to explore vertical spaces. They also occasionally find food morsels while patrolling countertops, reinforcing this behavior.

- Give your cat other vertical spaces to explore.
- Don’t leave tasty morsels on your counters for your cat to discover, and wipe down the counter after meal prep. Use a cleaner with a strong pine, citrus, or vinegar odor to make counters less attractive. Cats dislike strong smells and will avoid them.
- Teach your cat an “off” command using a clicker and treats. When he jumps off the counter, mark the behavior with a click and give him a tasty treat. Continue this regimen consistently! Soon he will learn that getting off the counters yields him tasty rewards, and will repeat it in the future.

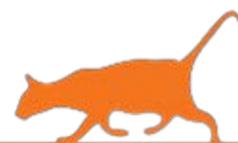


SCRATCHING

WHY CATS DO IT:

In the wild, cats scratch to signal their presence to other cats in the area. Cats also use scratching as a form of physical therapy for the muscles and tendons in their paws, as well as to help shuck off old nail husks.

- Give your cat as many different scratching posts as you are able. Cats prefer variety, and your cat may have a preference to a particular type of scratcher. Ideally, you should have at least one scratcher that lies flat on the ground, and one that is vertical. Most cats are happy with a corrugated cardboard scratcher. Avoid using scratchers which are similar in material to upholstery which is used in your household. This can be confusing for your cat, as she can not distinguish what is and is not meant for scratching if the surfaces appear similar to her.
- Put the scratchers in areas your cat likes to spend time in. Position them in obvious areas at first (or near places your cat has scratched before) and gradually move them to less obvious places later.
- Praise your cat for using the post. Put treats on it, rub it with catnip, and attach fun dangly toys to it to make it more attractive.
- If your cat is scratching on inappropriate surfaces, make that surface an unappealing place for her to scratch. The most simple method of doing so is by spraying a citrus scent on the area. Cats do not like the smell of citrus, and this will cause her to find a more preferable place to scratch (such as her cardboard scratcher which smells like catnip and tuna). Cayenne pepper and sprays made specifically to repel cats are also effective.
- Feliway®, a pheromone-containing spray, has been touted as a scratching repellent. The idea is that the scent will alter the significance of the previously marked (scratched) area and cats will no longer be interested in scratching there



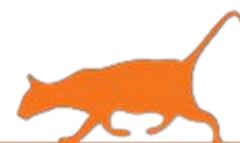
DO NOT DECLAW YOUR CAT

Unlike most mammals that walk on the soles of their feet or paws, cats walk on their toes. Their back, shoulder, paw and leg joints, muscles, tendons, ligaments and nerves naturally support and distribute their weight across the toes as they walk, run and climb. Your cat's claws are used for balance, exercise, climbing and stretching.

DECLAWING might sound like (and be presented as) a normal surgery removing the cat's claw. In reality, it is the painful amputation of not only the claw, but also the nail bed and all or part of the last digit in a cat's toes. The surgery can cause numerous medical and behavioral problems and is illegal in many places including the city of Berkeley, because it is considered an inhumane practice. It is so painful that it has been used in studies to investigate methods of pain relief.

PROBLEMS THAT COMMONLY ARISE FROM DECLAWING INCLUDE:

- Damage to the radial nerve, hemorrhage, and bone chips that prevent healing.
- Painful re-growth of the deformed claw inside the paw
- Weakening of shoulder, leg, and back muscles
- Painful arthritis
- Changing of the shape of a cat's feet, which can make it painful to walk
- Increased vulnerability to predators and other territorial cats while outdoors
- Personality changes: cats often become nervous, fearful and aggressive
- **Declawed cats almost always become compulsive biters**
- Balancing, climbing and stretching are difficult and painful
- Inappropriate elimination caused by pain of digging in the litter box



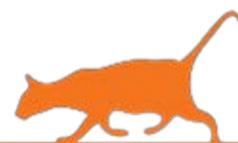
INDOOR-ONLY CATS

Berkeley Humane strongly recommends keeping cats indoors only. Indoor cats are safer, healthier, and have longer life spans (16-20 years vs. 3-5 years for outdoor cats).

WHAT YOUR INDOOR CAT WILL MISS OUT ON:

- Being hit and injured or killed by a car
- Ingesting deadly poisons, such as antifreeze or pesticides
- Eating animals that have previously ingested rodent and snail poisons.
- Being trapped and destroyed by an unhappy neighbor
- Being chased or attacked by a roaming dog, cat, or wild animal
- Being bullied out of the territory by a dominant neighborhood cat
- Contracting a disease, such as FIV, Feline Leukemia or rabies from a stray cat or other animal
- Becoming lost and unable to find the way home
- Being stolen or encountering someone with cruel intentions
- Being mistaken for a stray animal and take to local animal control
- Becoming frightened or injured during holiday activities

If kept indoors, your cat can live a long, fulfilling, and healthy life. Indoor cats require fewer vaccinations, accrue lower veterinary bills, require little or no flea treatment, live longer, are safer, and are less likely to become lost or stolen. Because your cat will never need to be on the alert for predators or territory invaders, her life will be much less stressful, too. She will also be more closely bonded to you!



INDOOR/OUTDOOR CATS

If you do decide to let your cat outside, follows these guidelines to keep her safe:

- Wait until she has been in your home for a minimum of 2 months before allowing her to set paw outside.
- Young kittens are especially vulnerable as their bodies and minds are still developing, so wait until your kitten is at least 1 year old before letting her outside.

****If you let her out sooner, she will probably not come back.****

- Keep your cat up to date on vaccinations and flea control.
- Never let your cat outside after dark.
- Make sure your cat is wearing a break-away collar with an ID tag and keep your cat's microchip information current.

Once your cat is completely comfortable and stable in your home, you can begin letting her explore the outdoors very gradually. The first time she goes outside, do not let her out of your sight, and do not leave her out for more than a few minutes. Once she has had a moment to look around and smell the air, bring her outside and give her a very special treat that she does not get to enjoy otherwise. Canned tuna makes a good high-value treat to reserve for training purposes.

Gradually increase the length of time that she is allowed outdoors, and always reward her when she returns home. Make sure that she is safely secured indoors when you are not home. Feed her dinner when she comes back inside for the night. This will help her get in the routine of knowing to come home for meals when the sun is about to go down.

If your cat does not come home at her regular time, do not wait before filing a lost pet report at your municipal animal shelter. The longer you wait, the less likely it is that you will get your cat back.

Just because your cat will be indoors doesn't mean that her life has to be boring—but it will be safer! Cats can have enriched and fulfilling lives as indoor companions. Stimulating your cat's mind and providing her with enriching experiences will entertain her and strengthen your relationship.



CATS AND CATS

It takes time for cats to adjust to having a new roommate. Your resident cat probably thinks that your new cat is trying to invade his territory and your new cat won't have an established territory yet, so she's at a disadvantage. It's very important to first allow your new cat to adjust to your home in a confined space. After your new cat is comfortable, follow these tips for successful introductions.

- Feed the two cats near the closed door of the confinement room. They will begin to associate eating (which is positive) with the smell of the other cat.
- Switching the cats' bedding allows the cats to become further accustomed to each other's scent. Make it positive by putting catnip or treats on the bedding.
- After at least a week long confinement period, switch the cats and let them explore each other's territory alone. Be sure not to let them see each other at this point.
- The visual interaction between cats is the most stressful part of an introduction. When your cats first see one another, keep them in separate rooms as far apart as possible. Let them look at one another for a brief moment before closing the door and rewarding them both. Ideally there will be one person with each cat who can reward each cat.
- Immediately distract both cats with interactive play.
- Increase the length of these interactions, and gradually decrease the distance. Continue praising positive interactions (ignoring one another is considered a positive interaction). If a negative interaction occurs, separate the cats while remaining calm and try again later. The slower you take the introduction, the more you will be setting up their relationship for success.
- Once they are in the same room, play with the cats separately. This will create a positive association with the presence of the other cat, as well as keeping them distracted by something productive.

It may take months for your cats to form a relationship. Given the proper amount of time, most cats can learn to coexist. Cats have preference to individuals, and just because your resident cat has had a close bond with other cats in the past, it doesn't necessarily mean that she will instantly adjust to the idea of a new feline friend.

Often, kittens will look to an adult cat as a playmate, which can be both fun and irritating to the adult. Make sure that your kitten is getting plenty of interactive play with you, and that your adult is getting plenty of down time and individual attention.

All cats should have their own food, water, and litterboxes. Monitor their interactions over resources (food, water, toys, etc) closely in order to prevent squabbles. Some cats eat competitively, causing overeating and sudden weight gain.



CATS AND DOGS

The key to successful cat-dog introductions is to expose them to each other gradually, under very controlled conditions, and to keep interactions calm and positive for all involved. You want to avoid creating situations where your cat runs away and your dog's prey-chase instinct is activated. Here are some tips for successful (and slow) introductions.

- Teach your dog basic commands like sit, down, and stay before he meets your cat.
- Confine your dog to another room whenever your cat is exploring her new territory. After your new cat is back in her confinement room, your dog can become familiar with the cat's scent in your home.
- After your cat is comfortable, put a baby gate in the door to your cat's confinement room and let the dog see into the cat's room. Reward your dog immediately for having positive reactions to the cat. Most of the time, this will mean that your dog is looking at the cat but not barking or running toward her.
- Keep introduction sessions very brief. Be prepared to reward your dog immediately, before she has the time to become stimulated by the presence of your cat.
- Gradually increase these sessions with your dog on-leash. Avoid situations where you are forced to physically restrain her (rewarding brief introductions should prevent this) but be attentive and prepared to use restraint to keep your cat safe, if necessary.
- Never allow your dog access to the cat's food or litter box. And make sure to create a safe place for your cat to get away from the dog—a high shelf or a baby gate work well.

DO NOT leave your animals unsupervised until you're 100% comfortable with their interactions.



CAT BODY LANGUAGE:

EARS

Cat ears are made to swivel back and forth and can adopt several different positions for a variety of reasons. When a cat's ears are erect, she is alert. Ears in a sideways position (almost like wings on a plane) indicate a cat on the offensive. Ears that are pinned back to a cat's head may indicate extreme defense or intense fear. When cats are interested or listening to something, their ears may swivel back and forth to find the source of the sound.

EYES

Relaxed cats have eyes with constricted, slit-like pupils. Dilated pupils are a signal that your cat is either very aroused or frightened. Cat pupils also dilate at night-time (to let more light into the eye for nocturnal hunting), but dilated pupils in the daytime or bright light are usually a sign that your cat is ready to fight or run. The degree of openness of the eyelids is another mood indicator. An alert or active cat will keep their eyes wide open. Semi-closed or fluttering eyelids indicate sleepiness or laziness. If the cat's eyelids blink or flutter at you, it is a sign of trust.

MOUTH

Cats are most often observed with their mouths closed. Occasionally, cats will open their mouths for specific reasons. If the mouth is open and the lips are pulled back (especially if there is hissing or yowling accompanying this gesture), the cat is indicating aggression. A yawn is used to convey stress or ambivalence. A gaping mouth, where the bottom jaw hangs open, is a signal that the cat is savoring pheromone aromas either in the air, on an object, person, or animal.

TAIL

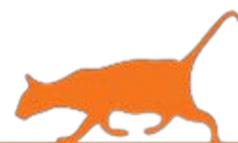
Cats use their tails to convey a range of emotions. A tail that is held straight up is a friendly greeting, while a vertical and curved tail is playful. A tail tucked underneath the body, or one that is puffed up, indicates fear and aggression. Tail movement is important to watch. A tail held low with a twitching tip is usually found alongside other signs of predation or stalking. Cats that slowly swish their tails back and forth use this to signal annoyance. Frantic swishes indicate the cat is experiencing a heightened emotional state.



FEARFUL, STRESSED OR DEFENSIVE CATS:



HAPPY, RELAXED CATS:



TOXIC HUMAN FOOD & MEDICATION

FOODS: Alcoholic beverages, avocado, chocolate (all forms), coffee (all forms), garlic, grapes, macadamia nuts, moldy or spoiled foods, onions, onion powder, raisins, salt, Xylitol, yeast dough.

MEDICATIONS: (non-exhaustive list) Anti-cancer drugs, antidepressants, cold medications, diet pills, painkillers, vitamins.

SEASONAL HAZARDS

Animal toxins, blue-green algae in ponds, citronella candles, cocoa mulch, compost piles, fertilizers, flea products, fly baits containing methomyl, slug and snail baits containing metaldehyde, swimming pool treatment supplies, antifreeze, ice-melting products, liquid potpourri, rodent bait.

HOLIDAY HAZARDS

Poinsettias, Christmas tree water (may contain fertilizers and bacteria), batteries, electrical cords, glass ornaments, ribbons or tinsel.

POISONOUS PLANTS (PARTIAL LIST)

All Bulbs
Amaylillis
Apple Leaf Croton
Autumn Crocus
Azalea
Baby's Breath
Bittersweet
Bird of Paradise
Branching Ivy
Buckeye
Elaine
Buddhist Pine
Caladium
Calla Lily
Castor Bean
Ceriman
Charming
Dieffenbachia
Chinese Evergreen
Christmas Rose
Cineraria
Clematis
Cordatum
Corn Plant
Cornstalk Plant
Croton
Cuban Laurel
Cutleaf Philodendron
Cycads

Cyclamen
Daffodil
Devil's Ivy
Dianthus
Dieffenbachia
Dracaena Palm
Dragon Tree
Dumb Cane
Easter Lily
Elaine
Elephant Ears
Emerald Feather
English Ivy
Fiddle-leaf Fig
Florida Beauty
Foxglove
Fruit Salad Plant
Geranium
German Ivy
Giant Dumb Cane
Glacier Ivy
Gold Dieffenbachia
Golden Pothos
Hahn's Self-Branching Ivy
Heartland
Philodendron
Hops

Hurricane Plant
Indian Rubber Plant
Janet Craig Dracaena
Japanese Snow Lily
Jerusalem Cherry
Kalanchoe
Lacy Tree
Philodendron
Lily of the Valley
Madagascar Dragon Tree
Marble Queen
Marijuana
Mexican Breadfruit
Miniature Croton
Mistletoe
Morning Glory
Mother-in Law's Tongue
Narcissus
Needlepoint Ivy
Nephtis
Nightshade
Oleander
Oriental Lily
Peace Lily
Pencil Cactus
Plumosa Fern

Poinsettia
Poison Ivy
Poison Oak
Pothos
Precatory Bean
Primrose
Red Emerald
Red Princess
Red-Margined Dracaena
Rhododendron
Ribbon Plant
Saddle Leaf Philodendron
Sago Palm
Satin Pothos
Schefflera
Silver Pothos
Spotted Dumb Cane
Stargazer Lily
String of Pearls
Striped Dracaena
Sweetheart Ivy
Swiss Cheese Plant
Taro Vine
Tiger Lily
Tobacco
Yew

