



Bringing Your New Cat Home

Congratulations on adopting a cat from St. Hubert's Animal Welfare Center! Whether your new cat is a kitten or an adult, the following suggestions will help your new pet make a smooth transition into your family and home. At St. Hubert's, we believe in setting you and your cat up for success!

The Right Stuff!

First, make sure you have the necessary supplies. These can include food and water bowls, a litter box, a collar, an identification tag, food, healthy treats, scratching post, and toys. Try to choose healthy training treats so you can reward your cat often while he is acclimating to your new home. If you are feeding predominantly dry food, you can use wet food as a treat, and vice versa. When choosing toys, select a variety of toy items and try some with different textures: soft toys, balls, catnip toys, interactive/treat-dispensers, and wand/feather toys.

Setting Your Cat Up For Success...

One way to help your cat establish good household manners is by setting up his environment for success. We recommend limiting your cat's space initially, and then gradually expanding it as he learns your routine and becomes familiar with the day to day happenings of your home. Limiting his space can include confining him to one room where his food, water, toys, and litter box are kept. We especially recommend starting a young kitten off in one room, so he does not get lost in your home, or not be able to find his way to the litter box. If your new cat or kitten seems hesitant to explore their new space you may help them feel more at home via scent swapping and creating safe hiding spaces. Tunnels and boxes can provide secure spots that are supportive of his need to monitor his new surroundings without feeling exposed in unfamiliar territory. Scent swapping can be done with a variety of materials such as blankets your new cat has laid on, a sock or a small washcloth. If using a sock or washcloth make sure to pet your cat gently with it, focusing petting on their cheeks, the base of the tail and wherever your cat is comfortable with being pet. Placing their scent in new areas will help your new feline friend feel more at ease and confident.

Cat-Proof Your Home

Cats like to explore. They like to chase, climb, stretch, scratch, and paw at things. These are normal cat behaviors! You may want to secure wires and cords from electrical equipment. Blind cords that dangle should be tied up or tucked away so they do not entice your kitty. Household cleaners should be secured in cupboards or closets that are not accessible to the cat. Some house plants, such as aloe and daffodils, can be toxic to cats. If you have house plants,



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you will want to find out if they are toxic to your new pet. For a complete list, the following website has a list of plants identified as toxic to cats:

http://www.asPCA.org/Pet-care/poison-control/Plants?plant_toxicity=toxic-to-cats

Litter Box Tips

Cats are fastidious animals. Establishing good litter box habits at the start will help prevent future elimination issues. Some cats like open boxes and others like covered or hooded ones. Be sure to choose a litter box that is an appropriate size for your cat. A good rule of thumb is to select soft and unscented litter. For multiple cat households, it is ideal to have at least one box more than the number of cats. Litter boxes should be located in areas that are easily accessible to the cat, but not in a high traffic area of the home. Keeping the litter box clean is important for your cat's overall health and to promote good habits. Some cats will not use a litter box that is dirty; scooping at least once a day will encourage your cat to use his box. If you have a dog in your home, make sure the litter box is not accessible to the dog. Your cat may avoid using the box if the dog is hanging around it!

The Scratching Post

Cats like to scratch for a variety of reasons. Scratching is one way that cats mark their scent on territory. They also stretch when they scratch. Scratching helps remove the dead sheath of the claw. Providing your cat with scratching surfaces can help deter him from using your furniture or woodwork. Some cats prefer horizontal scratching surfaces and some enjoy vertical surfaces. You should have at least one horizontal and one vertical scratching surface for your cat. In addition, try different textured surfaces to entice your cat. Scratching posts and surfaces can be made of wood, sisal, carpet, and even corrugated cardboard. Offer at least two types of surfaces to your cat. Place the scratching posts in common areas and pathways your cat uses in the house; if you put the posts out of sight, they are unlikely to be used since one of the reasons they scratch is to mark territory. You can also use training treats and catnip to encourage good scratching habits.

Indoor or Outdoor?

Indoor cats tend to live longer, healthier lives. Cats that go outdoors are exposed to potential risks such as: other animals that may prey upon them, getting hit by cars, ingesting dangerous substances such as anti-freeze, etc. That said, some owners may wish to let their cats outside to enjoy a little freedom. If you are going to let your cat out, we recommend that you supervise your cat. You might also consider spending time outdoors with your cat on a kitty harness and lead.

Some families even build an outdoor cat enclosure so kitty can spend a little time in the sun. A cat that is new to your home should not be let out for a few weeks; he needs time to bond to you and know where his home is.