

Starting Out on the Right Paw: The First Days With Your Newly Adopted Cat

Congratulations on adopting a new member of your household! In order to help your new feline friend adapt to your home, we suggest that you follow the guidelines below to make the transition easier.

1. **KEEP YOUR CAT CONFINED TO A QUIET, SAFE, SMALL ROOM INSIDE YOUR HOUSE FOR THE FIRST 7 TO 14 DAYS.** Place a clean litter box, food, water, sleeping blanket or bed, a scratching post and a few toys in a small, quiet, and safe place inside your house. Good places to use are a bathroom or a small bedroom. This gives your cat a chance to adjust to the smells and sounds of your house without being overwhelmed at first. This also helps your cat to remember to use the litter box since it is close and handy. Once your cat seems no longer afraid, allow him gradual access to the rest of your house.
2. **DO NOT LET HIM OUTSIDE FOR THE FIRST 60 TO 90 DAYS.** Cats are basically shy animals. If your cat becomes frightened when outside, he may run off and not return. Keep your cat indoors at for least the first 60 days so he will get to know you and will want to stay around. Better yet, make your cat an indoor cat for the rest of his life!
3. **SPEND AS MUCH TIME AS POSSIBLE IN THE ROOM WHERE YOUR CAT IS STAYING.** Get a book or some paperwork and just sit in the room where your cat is staying. Do not force your cat to sit on your lap. Instead just busy yourself and allow your cat to make the first move. It is not uncommon for shy cats to remain in hiding for up to 7 to 10 days before they will come out. Don't worry. Check the food dish to make sure he is eating a little something daily. And check the litter box to make sure he is using it.
4. **ALLOW YOUR CAT TO HIDE IF HE WANTS TO.** If you force your cat to come out from hiding you may find him grumpy and unwilling to sit in your lap. You may be bitten or scratched! Let your cat adapt to your house in his own time. When your cat is feeling more relaxed, he will come out and initiate contact with you. So have patience!
5. **PROVIDE PLENTY OF EXERCISE.** Once your cat is feeling relaxed, provide exercise for him. Some cats are very active, especially kittens. They need two daily exercise periods per day so they learn to attract toys and not your feet or clothes. Drag a bit of string or a shoelace around the house until he is so tired he cannot walk any more. Other good cat toys can be found at the AlphaPet, the Humane Society's own pet store.
6. **CLEAN THE LITTER BOX DAILY.** Many cats stop using their litter box because you forget to clean it daily. Help your cat want to use his litter box by cleaning it daily. If you have more than one cat, you need to provide at least one litter box per cat in the home.

If you have any questions, problems or concerns please call Humane Society Silicon Valley's Animal Behavior Helpline at (408) 727-3383, extension 753.

