

If you've just welcomed a furry new member into your family—congratulations!

Cats make wonderful companions. After a long workday, there's nothing as relaxing as having a warm, purring cat on your lap and nothing as entertaining as watching your cat chase the light of a laser pointer.

Since cats bring a lot of joy to our lives, maybe you're wondering how to return the favor by keeping your new kitty happy and healthy.

To help, we'll be providing articles full of advice for new cat parents.

Without further delay, here are a few tips for a healthy start:

Your New Cat: 6 Tips for a Healthy Start

Life with a cat is truly a joy.

Cats entertain us with their playful antics. They make us say Awwww when they purr and "make biscuits" (knead their paws) during catnaps.

Despite their reputation for being somewhat aloof, cats can be very loving. Once your new cat is settled in, be ready for them to ask for petting and cuddles on a daily basis!

1. Get Your Cat's Needed Supplies

Your cat needs:

- At least one litter box, preferably two, filled with 1-2 inches of kitty litter.
- Cat (or kitten) food and a water bowl.
- A scratching post, or other surface for scratching.
- Cat toys.
- A cat bed or quiet, comfy place to sleep.
- A place to hide (for example, under the bed, in their carrier with the door left open, or in a covered cat bed).

For toy safety, provide playtime supervision for any toys that could be accidentally swallowed (especially string toys).

When deciding where to place your kitty's supplies, choose a quiet room where they'll have some privacy, away from other pets and children (and even adults for the first few days). Privacy will help your cat feel more comfortable and secure while they're settling in.

2. Think Vertically When Cat-Proofing

Unlike most dogs, cats can jump several times their own body height. So, they can easily reach the kitchen counter, shelves, and other surfaces you might not expect.



For that reason, you'll want to put away anything you don't want your cat getting into. Store medications in a locked cabinet, put fragile items on a shelf your cat can't reach, so the items won't get knocked over and broken, and cover your dinner if you leave it unattended on the kitchen counter or table.

Cats can also squeeze into small, narrow spaces. So, if you can't find your new kitty, try checking under the bed, in the back of your closet, in the small space between the couch and the wall and so on.

3. Providing a Healthy Meal for Your Cat

If you know what type of food your cat has been receiving, continue that for now, and gradually add in an increasing percentage of the new food. Transition slowly to a new food.

A change to a new food—no matter how healthy the food is—can result in stomach upset or diarrhea if the change is done too quickly. It might sound obvious, but be sure to use food labeled for cats.

This means 'kitten food' for growing kittens, 'adult cat food' for grown cats or an 'all life stage food' that takes into account both stages. All life stage products are complete, balanced and can be fed to a kitten, an adult, or a senior provided the correct amount is fed.

Cats shouldn't have dog food as their primary diet. They need cat food because it's formulated specifically for a cat's needs and includes an appropriate amount of nutrients, like taurine, which they need for heart health.

If your cat steals a few nibbles from your dog's bowl, that's not a problem—just be sure their primary diet is for cats.



4. Plan for Your Cat's Veterinary Care

When you adopt a pet, it's a good idea to bring them to a veterinarian within the first 1-2 weeks.

If you received an adoption packet from a shelter or rescue group, check for local veterinarian recommendations—sometimes, you'll even find coupons or free exam offers as a thank you for rescuing a pet in need (there may be a time limit, so schedule accordingly).

Your vet will check your kitty's records and...

- Determine if they're up to date on vaccines (many are prior to adoption, but they may still need booster shots).
- Confirm that a microchip is present (a form of identification placed under the skin, in case your kitty ever gets lost) or place one if needed (it's a simple procedure with a needle, similar to receiving a vaccine).
- Answer your questions about spaying/neutering if that hasn't been done yet.
- Recommend any needed parasite control.

Your veterinarian will also give your cat a full physical exam to confirm they're healthy.

5. A Decision to Make: Will Your Cat Be Indoor Only?

Most veterinarians recommend keeping your cat indoors. That's because of risks that exist outside the home (predators, dog attacks, infectious diseases like FIV from other cats, and being hit by a car).

On the other hand, being indoor only means the need to prevent boredom and obesity. A combination of playtime, the right supplies, and attention from you can help your cat stay happy inside the home.

For more tips on keeping your indoor cat physically and mentally healthy, there are quite a few resources available online and from research programs focused on health and mental well-being of indoor cats.



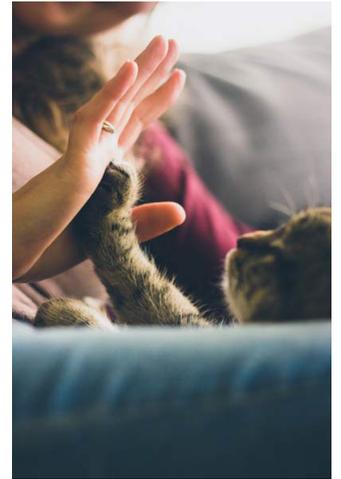
6. Be Patient...

It takes some time for a cat to adapt to changing circumstances. Soon enough, your feline companion will warm up to you and be grateful for their new home.

However, if your cat hides for a week or two after adoption and doesn't want to interact at all, don't worry—that can be totally normal. As long as they're eating and drinking and not showing any signs of illness, it's okay to let them go at their own pace.

Don't try to force an interaction. Instead, sit quietly (and maybe offer a treat or two) and let your cat choose to come to you.

The wait for a cat to feel comfortable in a new home may be longer than with a newly adopted dog... but, the payoff is worth it. Once your cat settles in, you'll have a cuddly companion who wants to be your friend for life!



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