

Welcome Home Guide

Be Prepared and Have Patience

Cats are particularly sensitive to new surroundings and some may hide under a bed or in a closet for days or even weeks.

Start your relationship off on the right foot and help them adapt more easily by following these guidelines:

Setting Up for Success:

- ❖ Do your new cat or kitten a favor and provide a small area for the first few days or weeks, before giving them access to the entire house. A bathroom or single bedroom works well. Provide them with the basics: food, water, a couple of toys, and a litter box. Too much space can be over-whelming and they may end up hiding in a place where you are unable to find them, so keep their world small at first.
- ❖ Fill a litter box with several inches of litter (they prefer a deep amount to dig in) and place it in an area where they can use it undisturbed. After all, everyone deserves a little privacy to do their business, and giving them a quiet place to eliminate will help prevent litter box avoidance.
- ❖ Set up a feeding station with food and water bowls and be sure to locate the litter box away from the feeding area. Nobody wants to eat their food next to the toilet. Be sure to change their water frequently and make sure they are drinking. Your newly adopted cat may not eat much or at all in the beginning. It's best to give your cat the same food they had at the shelter, or something very similar, at least at first, to reduce stomach upset. If your cat hasn't eaten for a few days, call your Veterinarian to ask for advice. Talk to them about what food they recommend for your new cat moving forward.
- ❖ Cats love small enclosed places where they can feel safe. Having an appropriate place to hide reduces stress in cats. Provide your new cat with their own little safe haven. If they came home in a cat carrier, that might be a good choice, but even a cardboard box with an opening cut out will do. If you prefer, you can buy a covered cat bed. In either case, make sure the space is big enough for the cat to stand up and turn around. Placing it where they can see the door to the room from their hidey hole will help so they won't be as easily startled.
- ❖ If there are other human family members, go over the ground rules about your new pet. Remind them to go slow, not to startle the cat, and to keep the door to their room shut.
- ❖ Read up on how to introduce your cat to other pets in a slow and controlled manner. Don't let any other pets barge into your new cats safe space unexpectedly. That can make future introductions more difficult.
- ❖ Now, you are ready for your cat's homecoming! Bring them home in a secure cat carrier and consider putting a towel over it for the car ride home. It will feel safer to them. They have seen a lot of excitement and may be stressed, so keep things calm and quiet. Do not take them out of the carrier until you are in their new room. (Make sure the toilet lid is down if they are to acclimate in your bathroom)
- ❖ Naturally, everyone is going to want to see the new family member. Set some ground rules and remind everyone that your new cat or kitten may be scared or nervous, but everyone can play a part in helping your new cat feel safe and secure.



Contra Costa County Animal Services

4800 Imhoff Place, Martinez, CA 94553 Main (925) 608-8400 | Volunteers (925) 608-8430
Tues - Sat 10am - 5 pm | Wed 10 am - 7 pm
www.facebook.com/ccasd www.ccasd.org

Day One:

- ❖ Sit on the floor and let them come to you. Don't force it. Just let them get acquainted on their own time. If they don't approach, leave them alone and try again later. Some cats are particularly frightened, and they may retreat to their hidey hole and not come out when you're around. They may only come out at night when the house is quiet. **Give them time.** You can read out loud to them, so they become familiar with your voice, or try spoon feeding some wet food to coax them out of their shell.
- ❖ Treats and play can often win over a cat or kitten, but too many treats might give them an upset tummy. For feisty cats, wand toys that have a feather or toy at the end of a string will protect your hands from playful teeth or claws, and homemade toys are often favored. A wad of a paper to bat around or a paper bag to hide in can be fun.
- ❖ As your cat adjusts, they'll show signs that they want to explore outside their safe haven. Try to prevent any other pets or family members from startling them while they gradually expand their territory, and make sure they always know how to get back to their litterbox so there aren't any accidents.

Expanding their territory:

- ❖ Check for holes or openings that leave ductwork accessible and cover them up. A kitten can easily slither into one of these. Be sure to keep doors and windows closed and locked. Remind the rest of the family as well.
- ❖ Look at your house from a curious cat's eye view for its climbing and exploring potential. When your cat is acclimated to your home, you may be surprised to find them on top of the upper kitchen cabinets, so make sure there's nothing on display there or on other high shelves that can be damaged or knocked off.
- ❖ Cats often love high places, so having plenty of safe vertical space will help them to survey their territory. A cat tree with a high perch will likely be a favored resting place. Some people even install cat shelves on the walls, or window perches so their cats can sunbathe and birdwatch while safely inside.
- ❖ A cat will sharpen their claws by scratching on things. This is a natural behavior. It is recommended to provide your cat with several socially acceptable scratching places to choose from. Some types are made of corrugated cardboard and lie on the floor; others are posts that should be tall enough so that the cat can stretch upward to scratch. Encourage your cat to use a scratching post by sprinkling it with catnip or dangling a toy at the top. Place a scratching post in each room where there is soft furniture. You can also install sticky tape (available at pet supply stores) to corners of upholstered furniture to deter scratching in unwanted places. Ask your vet to show you how to trim their nails but be sure to not cut too far down (to what is called the quick). This will make kitty bleed, is very painful, and may also result in them not trusting you.

Moving Forward:

- ❖ Congratulations and thank you again for Adopting a Shelter Cat! If you follow these tips, you'll be on your way to having a well-adjusted feline family member
- ❖ It may take your cat a few weeks to adjust. Remember, be patient!
- ❖ Call a veterinarian on the list we have provided within 72 hours to schedule your **first wellness visit free** for your newly adopted cat. If your vet is not on this list, ask if they will participate! Be sure to bring the record of immunizations from the shelter with you.
- ❖ Check out the Cat Adoption Resources Handout or our website, www.ccasd.org, for additional resources to address some of the common issues that can arise when bringing a new cat in to your home.



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