



## *Bringing Home your New Cat/Kitten*

Here are some basic tips to help make the transition of bringing home your new cat/kitten easier for everyone! **It's important to not rush the process in order to give your cat time to adjust to new surroundings and family members.**

### **Visit the Veterinarian**

Even if your new cat is already up-to-date on vaccinations, visit the veterinarian for a medical check-up. This is also the time to ask your veterinarian any medical questions you may have about caring for cats/kittens!

### **Educate Yourself**

In addition to consulting your veterinarian, visit the ARL's [website](#) for more information on caring for your cat/kitten. Read information from experts regarding cat/kitten behavior and care in ARL's book, [For Love of Cats](#).

### **Cat-Proof Beforehand**

It'll be much easier to spend the time making sure your home is cat-safe before you bring in your newest family member. If you haven't lived with a cat before you'll be surprised at the places a kitty can hide and the trouble she can get into. Look at cat-proofing as you would baby-proofing but consider this "baby" as a super toddler who can jump almost seven times her height, squeeze into spaces that seem completely impossible, use teeth to chew through cords, among many other talents that a new cat parent probably never thought possible.



### **Give Your New Cat a Place of Their Own**

Even though you plan on providing this wonderfully loving home for your new cat, she's not ready to see all of it yet. A cat is a territorial creature of habit and it'll be overwhelming for her to simply be placed in the middle of the living room the first day you bring her home. If you do that, the first thing she'll very likely do is run for cover somewhere. Instead, set up a sanctuary room, an extra bedroom for example, so she can take time to get her bearings.

### **Provide Resources and Hiding Places**

Her sanctuary room should be supplied with a litter box, scratching post, water, food bowl and toys. In addition to the basic resources, set up some hiding places. If you just put the cat in a bedroom without any, she may just hunker down under the bed. Consider a cat tree/tower; being able to perch on a cat tree provides ample viewing with the added feeling of security that cats need in order to feel safe. Another option is to turn boxes on their sides, line them with towels to create safe napping areas. These allow your cat a safe place to hide without hiding in a closet/under a bed.



### **Allow Time for Your Cat to Get Their Bearings**

Depending upon where she came from and her anxiety level, it can be normal to not want to eat, use her litter box or drink water right away. Provide a small amount of food and give some privacy. Your new cat may feel more comfortable to eat when no one is around initially. If she doesn't show any interest in eating the first day, just keep providing small meals and fresh water. Don't put out too much food so you can monitor whether any is actually getting eaten or not. By the second day she should be hungry enough to start nibbling. If not, consult your veterinarian. You don't want the cat to go more than a day without eating but your veterinarian will provide specific instructions.

### **Let the Cat Make the First Move**

Go at the cat's pace when it comes to interaction. While it's tempting to try to hold, pet or interact with your cat right away, she may not be ready to have you get too close. You can use a fishing pole-type toy to conduct a casual, low-intensity play session to ease her anxiety. If she's curious and seemed interested in checking you out, extend your hand and let her approach to sniff it. Don't try to pet at first – just let her sniff you and if she wants further interaction, she'll move closer.

### **Slowly Introduce Other Family Members to the New Cat**

Everyone in the family will be anxious to get to know the new cat but she may not be ready to have several unfamiliar people crowd her. Do individual introductions slowly. If she's hiding and seems not yet ready, back off and let her continue to gain confidence in her new surroundings. There will be plenty of time later to make formal introductions.

### **Let Your New Cat Explore**

When your new cat feels comfortable and is no longer hiding, you can start to let her explore beyond her sanctuary room. If you live in a large home, don't overwhelm her by letting her wander around in every room. Let her explore slowly, for short intervals, so she always knows the route back to her sanctuary.

### **Slowly Introduce Other Family Pets to Your Cat**

If there are resident pets in the home, then the introduction of the new kitty must be done with finesse and patience. Cat-to-cat introductions can be tricky so take the time to give the cats a reason to like each other through a gradual intro and positive associations. Keep in mind that the resident cat will feel as if his territory has been invaded and the new kitty will feel as if she has been dropped across enemy lines. If the resident pet is a dog, use care to ensure safety for all concerned. Don't leave the cat and dog alone until you've completed the introduction process are absolutely sure both the cat and the dog will be safe around each other.

***\*For more detailed information on how to safely and successfully introduce a new cat/kitten to your resident cat or dog, see [Introducing your Cat to Other Cats](#) and [Introducing Dogs & Cats](#).***

### **Begin Trust-Building and Training**

It's never too early to start training! Your new cat is always learning and what she learns depends on the messages you send. Be consistent and humane in your training process. Provide what she needs, use positive reinforcement training that sends a consistent message and always let her know when she's done it right.

**The decision to bring a cat into your life may have been a sudden and impulsive move but providing for their health and happiness should never be. Take the time to educate yourself on what cats need for physical, emotional and mental health!**

