

# CONGRATULATIONS ON YOUR NEW COMPANION

## ADVICE TO HELP YOUR NEW CAT/KITTEN SETTLE INTO THEIR NEW HOME.

When you first adopt a cat or kitten, you will need to help them gently settle in to their new home. A change of environment is always stressful for a cat, so it will often take a few weeks, if not months, for them to feel relaxed in their new abode.

### *Bringing your new cat home*

The first few hours after taking your cat home can affect how well they accept their new surroundings. Be prepared to be patient and never attempt to rush your cat into doing things they may not be ready for. It is important to provide them with a quiet place with everything they need, so set aside a dedicated, secure room before you collect them. This room should include:

- an area for food and water.
- at least one litter tray placed as far away as possible from their food and water and in a private, accessible location.
- somewhere to hide.
- access to a high spot where they can view their surroundings.
- a suitable place to sleep or, ideally, a choice of them.
- a scratching post.
- a few cat toys and space for them to play.



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### *The significance of scent*

Cats rely heavily on their sense of smell and will settle quicker if their new home smells familiar. To help your cat get used to your scent, take an item of clothing or a blanket from your home and leave it with the cat for a few days before you bring them home. When you pick your cat up, bring the same item back – ideally it will fit comfortably in their carrier with them and then it can be placed in their room. You could also use a calming product, available from the Sanctuary. These come as a plug-in diffuser or a spray. The scent helps to create a reassuring environment and may help to reduce stress.

### *Travelling home*

Being territorial and a creature of habit, a cat becomes very attached to their familiar environment and finds travelling very stressful. To help your cat stay calm during journeys, use a strong, secure and easily cleanable carrier, with a familiar smelling blanket inside and cover the carrier with another light blanket. You may wish to spray the inside of the carrier with the calming spray at least 15 minutes before putting your cat inside. The spray can help to create a feeling of familiarity and security.

### *The first steps*

When you arrive home, leave your cat alone to explore their room for an hour or so before introducing yourself, although some cats may need longer. When you go in to see them, get down to their level, put out your hand and call their name softly – let them come to you. If your cat chooses to hide, just sit quietly in the same room and occasionally talk to them gently in low tones – do not force them to come out. Give them plenty of time to adjust and continue to visit them so they can get used to your presence. As long as they are eating and using the litter tray, there should be no cause for alarm. If your cat is very timid, they may not want to come out to eat. In this case, try moving the food bowl closer to their hiding place and leaving the room. You may want to try offering a small treat or using an interactive toy to tempt your cat from their hiding place. Play is a good bonding tool because it is less intimidating than physical contact, relieves stress, and provides mental stimulation.

With a kitten, the process is slightly different as it is best not to leave them alone until they have settled. Provide them with a warm, secure bed at ground level. Once they've had a look around, show them where their litter tray, bowls and bed are by gently placing them near these items. They may feel a little unsettled if they are used to living with their mother and siblings so when you are not there, a soft toy or low-volume radio might help them feel at ease.



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### *Meeting the family*

Once your cat seems confident with you, introduce other (human) family members, one by one. Children are likely to be excited about the new arrival, but it is important to keep them calm. Let the cat come to them and when they do, show the children the correct way to gently stroke and interact with them. Children, particularly young children with little experience of cats, need to learn how to treat cats appropriately. Even the friendliest cat will defend themselves if they are pushed or pulled too much. Avoid picking your cat up in the early stages – wait until they have settled in and knows that you are not a threat.

Kittens are particularly delicate and, just like babies, they need lots of sleep so make sure your kitten is handled carefully and gets plenty of time to rest. Provide a room or area in the house that is out of bounds to children.

### *Exploring the rest of the house*

Once your cat is comfortable in their space and if you have no other pets in the house, you can gradually let them explore more rooms. Let your cat come out of their room of their own accord and keep the door open so they can dash back to their refuge if they feel the need. Make sure all external doors and windows are shut so they can't escape outside.

### *The big outdoors*

Don't let your cat go outside until they have fully adjusted to their new home and knows where their food will be coming from – this usually takes between two and four weeks. If your cat has not been neutered, don't let them out unsupervised until the operation has been carried out by your vet. Kittens should always be supervised when outdoors. When you let your cat out for the first time, do it when they're hungry so that you can tempt them back inside with food, until they are used to coming back to the house freely.

### *Introducing other pets*

When introducing your new cat to other pets, it is better to control the situation rather than leave the cats to sort it out for themselves. First impressions are important and a negative start may lead to lifelong conflict.