

Adoption Resources

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact our Adoptions Center by phone at (410) 235-8826 or by email at adoptme@mdspca.org.



Bringing Home a New Cat

So you've just adopted a new cat... congratulations! You're no doubt excited to get to know your furry friend, but cats can be scared and overwhelmed when they adjust to a new home. Here are some tips to help your cat feel comfortable in a new place.

1. BEFORE KITTY GETS HOME

Before you pick up your kitty, make sure everything is set at home. **Cats do better if they are given a smaller space at first, such as a bathroom or spare room.** You want to set up a cozy room for your new cat with food and water, toys, a litter box, and a comfy bed or blanket. This helps the cat feel like they're in control over their own space and creates a "base camp," or safe spot, to which they can retreat when you eventually give them free roam of your house.

We recommend keeping your cat in this safe spot for at least one week, then slowly expanding their territory.

2. FIRST 24 HOURS HOME

If you're like most people, you're super-excited to pet and play with your cat once you bring them home. However, put yourself in your cat's shoes: you were in a cage in a scary shelter; then somebody put you in a dark box; and now you're suddenly in a strange place. You don't know where you are, and a stranger is touching you! It's totally normal for your cat to be freaked out at first. They need time to get their bearings and get to know you.

That's why **you should open the carrier door (NEVER force the new cat to exit the carrier if they don't want to) and leave them alone in their room for the first night.** You can check in on them and see how they're doing from time to time, but let the cat come to you when they are ready. Don't chase the cat or try to take them from their hiding spot. This could frighten the cat and damage your relationship.

3. FIRST WEEK HOME

Every day, spend time in your cat's safe room. Get to know your cat and find out their favorite foods and toys. This is where the two of you can bond and create a relationship, so keep everything positive! If your cat is still frightened and afraid to come out of hiding, leave some yummy food near their hiding spot and hang out in the room. Read a book to your new cat and get them used to the sound of your voice. **As a reminder, never force a scared cat to do anything.** It will scare them further and set back any progress.

If you have other animals or young children, try to limit their interactions with your new pet during this time. You can do some "scent swapping"; bring a blanket or towel that smells like your kids or other pets into your new cat's room, and vice versa. If your pets will allow it, you can feed them on opposite sides of a closed door so that they can hear and smell each other while eating. Pairing food with the other pet will help to create a positive association with each other. However, it's too early for face-to-face meetings with other pets.

4. EXPANDING TERRITORY

It usually takes a week for a cat to settle in, but some cats may need several weeks or months. You'll know your new cat is ready to come out when they approach you willingly, after they've stopped hiding, and when they're curious about what's beyond the room. Once that happens, it's time to expand their territory.

Put other pets away and allow your cat to explore at their own pace. If they seem scared or overwhelmed, coax them back to their safe space and shut the door to give them time to let everything sink in. It may take several days of supervised exploration before your cat is comfortable with the layout of the home and is ready to have free reign. While your cat is learning the ropes, it's best to keep them in their safe space if you have guests over, as well as limit interactions with children.

5. INTRODUCTIONS TO OTHER PETS

Only after you've completed these four steps and your cat is fully adjusted to you and your home is it time for them to meet your other pets. For more information about introducing your new cat to other cats or dogs, check out these resources:

- [Introducing Dogs and Cats.](#)
- [Introducing a new Cat to Cat Already at Home.](#)