

Settling in your New Cat or Kitten

- Before coming to collect the cat, give some thought as to where you would like the cat to sleep. To begin with, choose a quiet room, make sure windows are securely fastened and, if there is a fireplace, block the chimney. Prepare a box or basket with a warm blanket and provide a litter tray. It is a good idea to use whatever the cat is used to in his litter tray, whether peat moss or cat litter.
- Buy or borrow a secure pet carrier for transporting your cat home. It is quite unsafe to travel with a cat loose in your car.
- **When you arrive home with your cat**, take him/her to the prepared room, close the door behind you and open the basket. Even a self-assured cat is upset by car journeys and will need some time to calm down and adjust to new surroundings. A timid cat will probably disappear under a chair and will ignore the prepared bed until he feels a little more secure. Leave the cat a bowl of water and a small amount of food near the litter tray, and leave him in peace to examine his new surroundings.
- Even if the cat is outgoing and friendly, it is important to give him time to get used to a small area of the house at first, as you want him to be quite sure about where his litter tray is. **Don't be tempted to give him the run of the house until he is well settled.** Talk to him frequently so that he gets used to the sound of your voice. If he enjoys being brushed, as many cats do, brush him daily – this is a very bonding experience for him.
- **If you have other cats or dogs**, you must accept that they will need time to adjust to the newcomer. As territorial animals, cats normally regard any new cat as an interloper and they are unlikely to take to him overnight. It will take much more than 24 hours for the animals to accept each other. It is likely to take days or weeks.



When you first bring the cat or kitten home, keep other pets away from the room you are settling him in. Once he seems happy, it is a good idea to make each animal aware that there is another in the house without allowing direct contact. For example, allow the resident pets to smell something with the new cat's scent on it and vice versa... a toy or blanket perhaps.

Keep an eye on the initial encounter. If there is trouble, separate them again. Eventually social adjustments will be made between the cats and the new arrival will be accepted. It is important that the animals already in residence be given a lot of attention and little treats so that they do not feel displaced by the newcomer.



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Registered charity: no. 9769

- **It is absolutely crucial that your new cat be kept indoors for at least three weeks and preferably four weeks before he is allowed out at all.**

This really does mean not going out AT ALL. A walled garden is not going to stop a cat getting lost in unfamiliar territory. Do not let him out into the garden until you are quite sure that he is happy and secure in his new home and will respond to your voice or to your banging a spoon on the dinner plate or tin. During his settling in period, get him used to associating food with banging the food tin or his dinner plate.

- For his first venture out, let him out just before a mealtime when he is hungry, and keep him under supervision. Make sure that the other pets or children are not able to chase him. Go out with him on his initial foray and keep your eye on what he gets up to. If he leaves the garden, continue to talk to him so that he knows where his home is located.

Call him back after 5 minutes or so. Bring him indoors and feed him. Do this for a number of days.

Kittens should not be left outside unsupervised until they are at least six months old, and then only for short periods.

Your cat will require yearly boosters and vaccinations to protect him/her against:

1. Feline Infectious Enteritis
2. Feline Viral Rhinotracheitis
3. Feline Calicivirus (Cat "flu").

Apart from the booster, this is an opportunity for your vet to check your cat's general condition, teeth and give him a worm tablet. As the incidence of Feline Leukaemia, for which there is no cure, is rising, it is advisable to have your cat vaccinated against this disease as well. This vaccination is not given routinely so please discuss it with your vet.

For Kitten Owners:

Have your kitten vaccinated at 9 weeks followed by a booster at 12 weeks and annual vaccinations throughout your cat's life. Don't forget to worm your kitten. **Have your female kitten spayed when she is 5 months old and your male kitten neutered at 6 months.** This is absolutely essential to prevent the ongoing misery of unwanted cats and kittens. It is not necessary for a female cat to have a litter of kittens before being spayed. The cost of feeding and finding homes for unwanted kittens far exceeds the cost of having your cat neutered. We cannot emphasise strongly enough the necessity for seeing to the neutering of your cat in good time and not putting it off until the cat is in kitten, or, if a male, has been responsible for a litter of unwanted kittens. If a kitten is given to you by Cats' Aid, it is on condition that spaying and neutering is done at the appropriate time. This is your contract with us.

Always leave a bowl of fresh water for your kitten. Milk is not necessary and often causes diarrhoea.

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Warning:

Cats and kittens love small dark places so always check the washing machine before switching on. If the door has been open, check before closing it. **Best practice is to never leave the door open.** Take the same care with other appliances such as dishwashers and tumble driers. If you have kittens, always check that the toilet lid is down. Kittens are extremely curious and will investigate everything. If a kitten falls into the toilet bowl, it will not be able to climb out and will drown. Accidents of this nature have happened.

Before disposing of empty food tins, always flatten completely. Even if your cat does not have the opportunity to investigate the tin, once it is in your litter bin a passing cat who may be hungry and looking for food could get his head stuck in the can with possibly lethal results. Again, this has happened.

If you have workmen/builders/decorators in the house, they may not be as "cat minded" as a cat owner so it is always advisable to make sure that your pet is kept in a secure room with food, water and a litter tray while the work is going on. This will avoid any accidents with falling masonry, pots of paint or doors being left open.

Tips:

There are a number of safe anti-flea preparations obtainable from your vet. Exercise caution in using flea collars, they can cause skin irritation and should never be used in conjunction with any other preparation. Kittens under one year old should not wear a flea collar.

We strongly recommend that your cat wears a safe collar fitted with a disc giving your name and telephone number. There are collars that open on pressure and these are the only ones we would recommend. Collars that are too loosely fitted or too tight can cause serious injury... if too loose the cat could get his paw stuck in it; if too tight and it gets caught in something, a tree branch for example, the cat can be strangled. You should be able to get two fingers in-between the collar and the cat's neck. However the safest and most effective way of identification for your cat is micro-chipping and this is very strongly advised. Your vet can do this quick, simple and inexpensive procedure.

Kittens under 7-8 months should not wear any kind of collar.

Finally, Cats' Aid is always delighted to get progress reports of your cat and we are always there for support and help with any problems you may encounter. We wish you many happy years with your new companion.



Donation:

Cats Aid is a wholly voluntary non-profit making organisation and the cost of medical care, boarding, neutering and vaccinating is high. Therefore if you do get a cat from us, a donation towards these costs would be really appreciated. Our suggested minimum is €40 or whatever you can afford.