

# Bringing Your New Cat Home

Introducing a cat into a new home can be easy or extremely stressful. A cat's normal reaction to a new place can be to run and hide. Others are curious about the new home right away and want to explore as soon as they exit the carrier. If the cat is allowed to adapt to a new environment at her own speed, everything generally works out. Some cats take minutes or hours; other will take days, weeks, or even months to get comfortable. The length of time needed to adjust to a new territory will depend on the cat's temperament, past experiences, and whether there are other animals present. A normal adjustment period usually takes one to two weeks.

Independent of the cat's temperament, the following four steps will help ease any cat's transition to the new home:

**Step 1.** Before arriving with the new cat, set up a small room that will serve as the cat's initial safe place. Any small, quiet room works well, such as a bathroom with a window, small spare bedroom, or an office. Be sure to put everything the cat needs inside this room: litter box, food, water (food and water placed as far as possible from the litter box), toys, scratching post, bed, a hiding box, and possibly a Feliway® pheromone diffuser that makes the space smell familiar. Provide multi-level access such as chairs and shelves. Cats like to go up high for safety.

**Step 2.** Bring the cat into the room and open up the carrier. Then let the cat decide whether she wants to exit and explore or remain inside the carrier for a while. Many times a cat will remain inside the carrier. Do not force her out, let her explore at her pace and give the cat time to adjust to her new surroundings.

**Step 3.** Sit and talk to the cat or leave her for a few minutes and come back to the room to visit later; let the cat set the pace of the visits. Don't force your attention on the cat-when she wants affection, she will ask for it. When the cat is perfectly comfortable in this one room, start to open the door and

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let her explore the rest of the house at her own pace. Some cats may begin investigating at night, making short explorations interspersed with multiple retreats to their safe haven. Make sure she always has access to her initial room for safety.

**Step 4.** Once your cat is comfortable in every room of the home, then you can rearrange the food station and the litter box locations. Keep in mind that depending on the size of your home you may want to offer more than one litterbox. See [Litter Box Tips](#) handout for more information.

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