



CAT & KITTEN ADOPTION HANDBOOK



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PET PORTRAITURE

CAT ADOPTION HANDBOOK CONTENTS

Congratulations on adopting your cat from Toronto Cat Rescue! We hope the following pages will help prepare you for life with your new cat.

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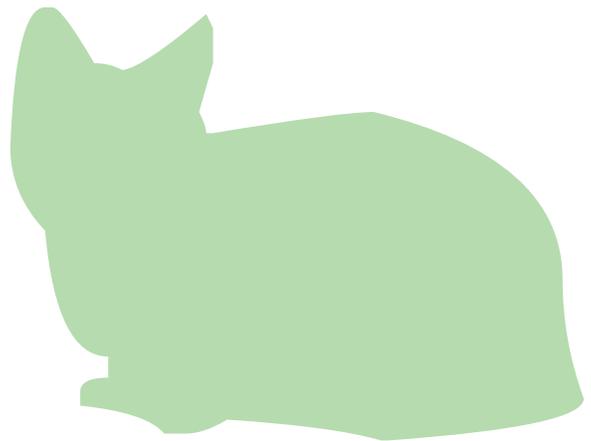
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SET UP FOR SUCCESS

Meeting Your Cat's Needs

Adding any new family member, especially the four-legged kind, requires a certain amount of equipment and some adjustments to your home for everyone's safety and comfort.

Here's a list of must-have supplies for a great start with your new cat:

Basics

- Food
- Water and food bowls
- Cat bed
- Sisal scratching post
- Cat carrier
- Litter box
- Litter, litter scooper
- Enzymatic cleaner

Cat Care

- Cat toothbrush, cat toothpaste
- Nail trimmer
- Grooming brush

Training and Mental Stimulation

- Harness, leash
- Food dispensing toys (KONG® Cat Wobbler, treat balls)
- Interactive toys (wands, laser toys, feather toys, mitt toys)
- Play-alone toys (squeaky toys, fluffy balls, crinkle/crackle balls)
- Soft treats, crunchy treats, freeze-dried meats



Setting Up Your Home

Safe Haven

As tempting as it is to give your cat the run of the house right away, moving into a new home is a stressful experience for cats. Having a safe, confined area instead—a safe haven—allows your cat to make a gradual transition to her new home. The safe haven is where your cat will stay until she is completely comfortable with her new home (which could take days or even weeks), as well as a place she can retreat to anytime she needs a little space and alone time.

Where? The ideal safe haven is small, quiet, and easy to close off with a door. It should be mostly free of furniture, especially anything your cat can hide in or under where you can't get to her. The best places for a safe haven are the bathroom, a small bedroom, or a large, well ventilated closet.

What? Furnish the safe haven with a bed, water and food bowls, some play-alone toys, a scratching post near the bed, and a litter box as far away from the bed and food as possible.

Tip: More than one cat? Then giving your new cat a safe haven is even more important.

Kitty Proofing Your Home

Remember, cats are curious by nature. Keep your cat safe from these common household hazards:

- 🐾 **Plants.** Many plants (such as plants of the lily family, onions, and garlic) are toxic to cats. Put your plants in areas your cat can't access. Alternatively, spray them with bitter apple to discourage your cat from eating them. Provide safe herbs such as catnip or alfalfa for your cat to chew on.
- 🐾 **Poison.** Human medications (especially aspirin, acetaminophen, and NSAIDS), veterinary medications, insecticides, rodenticides, household cleaners, chemicals, and paints can all cause severe injury or death to cats; so can chocolate. Secure all cupboards, closets, and cabinets—use childproof latches when possible.
- 🐾 **Chemical rub-off.** Use natural, nontoxic cleaners in your home. Cats are fastidious groomers and easily pick up chemical residue on their fur and paw pads from contact with harsh cleaning agents. Ammonia-based cleaners and phenol disinfectants are particularly dangerous.
- 🐾 **Strings.** Cats love string games and are quick to pounce when they see an opportunity. But swallowed string can cause intestinal damage and may require expensive surgery to remove. Keep tinsel, thread, dental floss, rubber bands, cords from blinds, necklaces, dangly earrings, and anything similar out of your cat's reach as they can be fatal.
- 🐾 **Cords.** Bundle up and hide any electrical wires or cords. Cats find them tempting to chew on, and they may try to pull out plugs.
- 🐾 **Bags.** Cats love the way plastic bags sound and move; however, plastic bags are not safe for cats since they often try to chew on them or climb into them. Paper bags are a safer option, but make sure to cut off bag handles as cats can get caught in them.
- 🐾 **Unsafe hiding places.** Block access to dangerous places for cats, such as behind stoves, refrigerators, motors, washers, dryers, etc.
- 🐾 **Open windows/doors.** Contrary to popular belief, most cats that fall from windows don't survive. Make certain all your windows are cat-proof (screens should be tight!) and can't be pushed open.
- 🐾 **Balconies.** Ensure that your cat does not have access to your balcony. Cats don't know how far they are off the ground, and if they see a bird or bug fly by, they will jump at it without hesitation. Avoid serious injuries by ensuring cats are not able to get outside to a balcony.

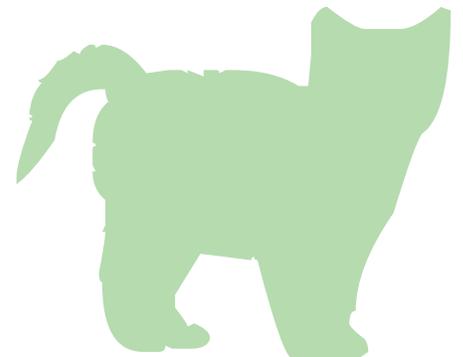
For a Happy & Healthy Cat

Play and Training

Environmental enrichment through play and training (yes, cats can be trained) means a healthier *and* easier-to-live-with cat. Active cats with a stimulation-rich environment are less anxious, sleep more, and are more likely to maintain a healthy weight. Does that mean you must take up cat agility if you adopted a young, active cat? Of course not, but occasionally winding up a motorized mouse isn't enough.

Here are some suggestions for activity sessions:

- 🐾 Play with your cat using interactive toys like wands, laser pointers, or feather toys
- 🐾 Set up an obstacle course for your cat to navigate to reach her food
- 🐾 Provide a multi-limb climbing tree or jungle gym
- 🐾 Train your cat to walk on a leash with a harness and stroll in a quiet, safe area
- 🐾 Train your cat to fetch, sit, shake, come when called, and other tricks



Mental Stimulation

Bored cats are a lot like children. Unless you give them something fun to do, they will make their own fun. An energetic cat might climb the curtains; a more sedate cat may take over a windowsill and not move at all. Encourage your cat to be physically and mentally active by giving her a variety of toys and puzzles.

Here are some options* for exercising your cat's mind:

- 🐾 Brainteaser toys
- 🐾 Play-alone toys (cat mobiles, toys that move or squeak, ball toys, feather toys)
- 🐾 Homemade jungle gyms, e.g. using cardboard boxes, paper bags, and cushions
- 🐾 Visual stimulation, e.g. fish tanks (securely covered), screensavers, Video Catnip™ DVDs
- 🐾 Food-dispensing toys, cat KONG, treat balls

*Always choose safe, cat-appropriate toys. Beware of small, loose objects or string that can be ingested. Check with your vet before introducing your cat to a new product.

Cat Care

Grooming

Cats have a lot of fur and despite meticulous self-grooming, they do shed. Brushing and combing are excellent ways to bond with your cat and keep all that fur under control. Frequent brushing can help lessen hairballs. Use a soft- to medium-bristle brush and groom your cat regularly. To make sure she enjoys the experience, give her little tasty treats while you groom her.

Food and Water

Have one food bowl (use ceramic or stainless steel, never plastic, which can cause an allergic reaction) or food-dispensing toy for each cat in the household, and ditto for water bowls. Pay careful attention to how much food your cat eats. It's crucial for her health that she eats well and any loss of appetite should cause concern. Discuss feeding with your veterinarian the first time you visit.

Tip: Milk is a no-no. Cats don't need it; in fact milk makes many cats ill if they drink it, because they don't have the enzymes to break it down, which results in upset stomachs.

Medical Concerns

Cats hide illness very well, so watch carefully for signs of illness. Some things to watch out for:

- 🐾 Is your cat eating, drinking, and using the litter box regularly?
- 🐾 Is she lethargic?
- 🐾 Does her coat look less healthy? Has she stopped grooming herself?
- 🐾 Does she strain or cry when using the litter box?
- 🐾 Does she have diarrhea?
- 🐾 Is she sneezing? Does she have watery eyes?
- 🐾 Is she shaking her head a lot or scratching at her ears?

Visits to the Veterinarian

Even healthy adult cats should have annual vaccine booster shots and checkups, because many illnesses can be detected in their early stages. Be prepared, too, for emergencies. Have the name of emergency veterinary services handy, and know how to get there in a hurry if necessary.

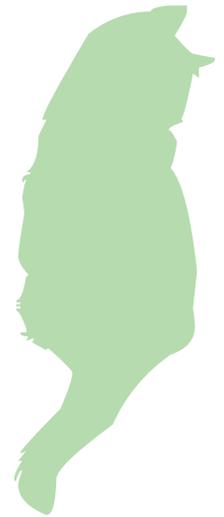
Multi-Cat Households – Introducing Cats

If there are other cats in your household, a slow introduction is very important.

Setting the Scene

Help your new cat settle into your home by keeping her in a small room with a litter box, food, water, toys, and a safe place to hide (such as a cat carrier with a towel inside). Choose a room that doesn't interrupt your resident cat's routine. Let her become comfortable there for three or four days.

Do not allow the cats to interact during this time. However, it is fine for the cats to be sniffing under the door and investigating. Switch bedding and other items that have the scent of each of the cats on them. This way each cat can become used to the scent of the other without meeting face to face. Spend quality time with each cat on either side of the door—petting, playing, and relaxing. Again, this will allow them to be aware of each other in a non-stressful situation. This is often reassuring to both cats.



Signs of Stress

If at any point the hissing is intense, or either cat is growling, continue to keep them separate for as long as it takes the upset cat(s) to settle down. Other signs of stress are: not eating, not using the litter box appropriately, over grooming, etc. If these symptoms are apparent in your resident cat, please call your veterinarian. If the adopted cat shows these signs, please contact a Post-Adoption Counselor from Toronto Cat Rescue (<http://torontocatrescue.ca/adopt-a-cat/post-adoption-support/>). This may mean that the separation needs to last a week or more.

If there is no intense hissing from either cat (i.e. loud hissing with wide-open mouth and teeth showing, or multiple hisses), prop the door open about an inch to allow the cats to view each other without being able to make contact. Leave the door like this for a few days. Watch their interactions; if no serious hissing or aggression is noted, then it's time for the next step.

First Interactions

If the sniff visits are going well, it's time to start supervised interactions. Open the door and let the new cat come out and explore. Let the cat come out of the room at her own pace. Forcing the cat to come into a new territory will just make the cat increasingly tense and prolong her insecurity. Let the cats enter each other's territory for about a half hour. Then separate the cats and repeat this process a few times each day. If a cat seems overly stressed about the other cat, you can distract the cat with toys or food treats, but be sure to keep the toys four or more feet apart when playing. Sometimes cats play so hard that they forget to be upset about the other cat and start to become accustomed to the other cat's presence. There may be rivalry for toys, so this may not always work. Treats may also help alleviate this situation, so be sure to give them treats in the presence of the other cats. This will not only distract them, but it will also serve as a reward for not hissing.

At the end of the play or treat session immediately separate the cats. This time apart allows them to be able to process the information they gained while they were together. It also allows them both to regain their sense of territory and confidence, which encourages a favourable interaction at their next meeting. Continue this process daily, lengthening the amount of time they are together a little each session.

Never punish a cat for aggressive behavior toward another cat. Most owners do this thinking they will teach the cat that the aggressive behavior is inappropriate, but it only ends up making the cat more stressed and upset, prolonging the cat-to-cat aggression. The best way to react is either to stay silent, and calmly separate the cats, or to speak softly to the cats.

Extra Steps for a Shy Kitty

If the new cat is shy, the introduction must be taken more slowly. She will need extra time to settle into her new environment, and to feel comfortable in her safe room. It may be necessary to repeat the introduction and separation program several times. This separation time is also an excellent time for you to bond with each cat, one at a time, so that they do not over-bond to each other.

When ready, open the door and allow the cats to interact on their own time. Do not force either cat to go from one space to another.

Supervise their Interactions

Only let them interact for short sessions: ten to fifteen minutes at a time. Then separate them again. Do this several times a day until you are sure they are tolerating the presence of the other cat, and not fighting, chasing, or watching the other cat intensely. Do not leave them alone together until you are reasonably certain that they will not hurt one another.

Introductions Often Take Time

Some cat-to-cat introductions go very smoothly, while others may take weeks or months before the cats learn to tolerate each other. The best thing to do is to go as slowly as necessary—don't rush the introduction. Please remember that you are hoping and working for a very long-term relationship; being patient at first will pay off! Rushing the introduction will often cause serious problems which may take longer to solve—or in some cases, may never be solved.

Finally, most cats will adjust to living within a multi-cat household. Like people, some will enjoy it more than others. Patience on the part of all concerned will be more likely to produce an enduring peace than anything else. Enjoy your kitties!

ARRIVING HOME WITH YOUR CAT

Territory and a predictable routine are key elements of feline happiness. Cats thrive when they know a) which part of the world is theirs and b) what to expect from their human family. That's why it's best to resist the urge to lavish your cat with attention the moment you bring her home, and instead let her adjust to her new home (and territory) in her own time. A calm, unhurried transition at a feline-appropriate pace can prevent many stress-related behaviour problems, such as digging, biting, scratching, excessive grooming, and litter box aversion. Here's how to do it:

The First Hour

1. When you arrive home, take the cat carrier into your cat's safe haven. If you haven't set up a safe haven yet, do so before opening the carrier.
2. Open the carrier and let your cat decide whether she wants to come out to explore. Please note your cat may stay inside the carrier for hours.
3. Whether or not she comes out of the carrier, leave your cat in her safe haven.



The First Few Days

Visit the safe haven often during the day, but let your cat decide the pace of interactions. Never force attention or petting on your cat; she will ask for it when she's ready. When your cat is completely comfortable in her safe haven, feels at home with everyone in the household, and paws at the door asking to be let out, open the door and let her explore the rest of the house at her own pace. Cats usually begin exploring at night, making brief excursions into new territory, followed by rapid retreats to the safe haven.

Tip: It's common for a cat to take a few days to adjust to her new home, but it could take several weeks, or even months.

The Bedtime Routine

By nature, cats are most active at dusk and dawn, but domestic cats are primarily creatures of habit. If you'd like your cat's activity schedule to suit your lifestyle—rather than late night workouts followed by her pouncing on you in bed and meowing for food at 5 a.m.—then work actively to create those habits right away.

- 🐾 Play with your cat every day at times that work for you. If you go to bed at midnight, set playtime for 11:30 p.m. Or, if you go to bed at 10 p.m. and get up at 6 a.m., set playtime for 6:30 a.m., and give her an evening meal later, after the final play session.
- 🐾 Establish a special location for play—and don't make it your bedroom. Use a cat-appropriate space like near a cat tree or condo.
- 🐾 Pick up all toys (and items your cat likes to play with) at night and put them away.
- 🐾 Close the door to your bedroom or put your cat in her safe haven and ignore any tantrums.

Going Forward: Creating a Routine

- 🐾 Feed your cat the same brand of food at the same time every day.
- 🐾 Set aside some time to play with your cat mornings and evenings (when cats are most active).
- 🐾 Groom and pet your cat every day.
- 🐾 Clean the litter box at approximately the same time every day.
- 🐾 Establish a noise and activity level for your household that isn't stressful to your cat.
- 🐾 Reward your cat consistently for behaviours you like, such as using her scratching post.

LITTER BOX OVERVIEW

The best way to introduce your cat to her new home is to confine her to one room or area—her safe haven. A further benefit to this approach is that it helps prevent litter box problems. However confident and ready to explore your cat is, keep her confined to the safe haven until she has used the litter box at least once.

Litter Box Do's and Don'ts

DO

- ✓ Have enough boxes. You need one litter box per cat in the household, plus one extra.
- ✓ Experiment to find a litter your cat likes: clumping, non-clumping, pellets, etc.
- ✓ Keep the litter box immaculate; cats are extremely fastidious.
- ✓ Use mild dishwashing liquid or hot water and vinegar to clean the box. Never use harsh chemicals like bleach or ammonia.
- ✓ Scoop the box every day. Clean the box every two to three days, or at least weekly.
- ✓ Place the litter box in a quiet, private area away from food and water bowls.

DON'T

- ✗ Use scented litter. Perfumed smells tend to repel cats.
- ✗ Get a box that's too small; your cat needs space to turn around, dig, and cover.
- ✗ Leave waste sitting in the litter box; nobody likes a dirty bathroom.
- ✗ Use strong chemicals or disinfectants to clean the box.
- ✗ Use a litter box liner or a covered box.
- ✗ Place the litter box near anything noisy, like a washing machine, furnace, or toilet.
- ✗ Place the litter box in a high-traffic area in your home.

Tip: If you have a multi-story house, have litter boxes on each level.

Litter Box Problems

First, it's important to know that your cat isn't eliminating outside her litter box out of spite. She has either not learned to use the litter box reliably, is stressed, is ill, or is avoiding it because she doesn't like it. Cats can form aversions to the litter box for a variety of reasons, so do a bit of sleuthing. She may object to the smell, litter texture, or may prefer a covered/uncovered box. Litter box problems are common and usually very fixable.

Troubleshooting Litter Box Problems

1. *Always begin by consulting your veterinarian to rule out medical causes.*
2. Check all the do's and don'ts above to make sure you're following the guidelines.
3. If the problem could be stress-related (new cat in the area, construction outside), deter stray cats from your yard and restrict your cat's view/access to windows, noisy areas, etc.
4. Could it be roommate squabbles? Confine your cats to separate areas of the house. For more information, see page 6 on Introducing Cats.

Tip: Never yell at or punish your cat for not using her litter box. It will only make her afraid of you, and it will usually make the problem worse.

ENTERTAINING AND TRAINING YOUR CAT

To be physically and behaviourally healthy, your cat needs outlets for her innate feline abilities. That means opportunities to stalk, hunt, pounce, climb, hide in safe shelter, and watch interesting small-animal activity like fish in a bowl, birds outside a window, or screensavers with moving critters. She also needs plenty of respectful attention from and interaction with you.

Indoor vs. Outdoor

We recommend keeping your cat indoors. This may sound like an unnatural life for a cat—and in a sense, it is. But like it or not, we humans have created a world that isn't safe for cats to roam in, whether in cities, suburbs, or the countryside.

Compare the hazards of these two lifestyles:

Outdoor Hazards	Indoor Hazards
 Getting hit by a car	 Boredom
 Fights with other cats and wild animals	 Weight gain due to inactivity
 Diseases (feline leukemia, FIV)	 Household poisoning or accident
 Parasites (fleas, worms, ticks, mites)	
 Chemicals (anti-freeze, rat poison)	
 Getting trapped in garages, basements	
 Inclement weather, hunger, and thirst	
 Being stolen or mistreated by strangers	

Given that you can easily alleviate—or completely eliminate—the indoor hazards by playing with your cat, enriching her environment in various ways, and cat-proofing your home, it's easy to see how the indoor-only lifestyle is superior.

Preventing Escapes

For some cats, transitioning to an indoor-only lifestyle may be an adjustment, especially if the cat has lived outdoors in the past or is naturally adventurous. Here are some tips to keep your cat safe:

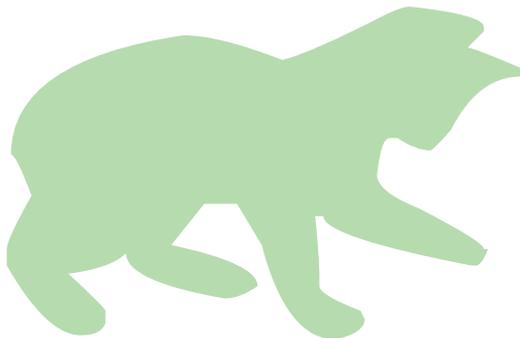
- 🐾 Avoid getting into the habit of saying hello or goodbye to your cat right next to the doorway.
- 🐾 Instead, designate another spot away from the door for all greetings and departures. This should be a spot your cat likes, such as her cat tree or condo.
- 🐾 When entering the home, walk directly to the designated spot before greeting your cat.
- 🐾 Say goodbye here rather than at the door as well. Distract your cat by leaving her with a treat or a toy.

How to Play with Your Cat

Fun toys that encourage your cat to entertain herself are great. But truly stimulating and satisfying play involves a playmate—you. We recommend two interactive play sessions per day of about 10–15 minutes. Great times are in the morning before you leave or start work, and in the afternoon/evening shortly after arriving home or finishing work.

1. Set the Stage

Create a jungle gym or obstacle course in your living room with cardboard boxes, chairs, and paper bags (never plastic) with the handles cut off as proxy bushes and trees. Create tunnels by rolling up area rugs. Add interest with egg cartons, shoeboxes, and paper tubes scattered along the way.



2. Provide Realistic Prey

Over time, get an assortment of “prey” so you can vary the game. Great options are toys that resemble the look and movements of birds, rodents, insects, and snakes. For interactive play, nothing beats the fishing-pole variety of those toys. When you play with your cat, try to mimic the relevant prey animal's behaviour. Birds, for example, flap their wings, land occasionally, take a step or two, and then take off again. And give your cat time to plan her attack so her mind is engaged, not just her reflex to swat at anything that dangles.

3. Make It Fun

Allow your cat to make many satisfying captures during a play session. Keep this in mind if you use interactive toy alternatives like laser light pointers or soap bubbles. Fun as they can be, don't rely solely on these; it's too frustrating for your cat to never actually get to catch her prey.

4. End the Game Gradually

Always wind down play session gradually, instead of abruptly. Do this by making the injured prey slowly “die.” This sets off end-of-hunt responses in your cat, lowering her excitement and energy level. Put all interactive toys away between play sessions; they should be reserved for playtime with you. Instead leave out furry mice and other toys that are safe for solo play.

Environmental Enrichment

Enriching your cat's environment is key to having a healthy, happy cat. Just as zoos provide toys, puzzles, and food challenges to alleviate boredom and stress in wild cats, you can use environmental enrichment to reduce urine marking, play aggression, cat-cat aggression, and fearful behaviour in your cat.

- 🐾 Cats are hunters, so never free-feed. Have your cat forage for her food by using treat balls and other food-dispensing toys, and by hiding dollops of food in different locations.
- 🐾 Get a cat fountain or use an old bowl for games that involve floating ping-pong balls or hollow plastic fish.
- 🐾 Have a variety of toys for solo play and rotate them so your cat doesn't get bored with her squeaky mouse or crinkle ball.
- 🐾 Fish tanks with secure covers, cat videos of birds and small animals, and computer screensavers can entertain your cat for hours.
- 🐾 Use catnip in toys or simply as a stimulant once every two to three weeks to see your cat enjoy some silly antics. Stop if your cat becomes aggressive while under the influence of catnip.
- 🐾 Put a ping-pong ball in the bathtub; the slight slope toward the drain will help the ball stay in motion, and it won't be lost under the sofa.

Training Your Cat

It's time to dispel the myth that cats can't be trained. Not only can you train your cat to come when called, do a high five, and go through an agility course, but you also can change unwanted behaviours, reinforce behaviours you like, and help her become less fearful and more confident.

Positive Reinforcement

Training your cat through positive reinforcement means using your cat's natural motivations to teach her which behaviours you like and which you don't. The trick is to find the right motivations. Where dogs have been bred to work with us and respond well to praise and attention, cats are solo hunters and much less social. Determine your cat's favorite things, such as play, toys, and treats, and use those to motivate her.

A Word on Punishment

Never use physical punishment. A cat's response to yelling or physical punishment is stress—and stress is the leading cause of behaviour problems such as aggression and house soiling. It also erodes the trust between you and your cat and prevents learning.

A Word on Declawing

Declawing involves surgical amputation of the first joint on a cat's paw and is most often done to prevent the cat from scratching furniture or people. The procedure comes with health risks and unfortunate behavioural consequences. We strongly advise against declawing, and instead recommend training cats to use scratching posts and trimming their claws regularly.

Unwanted Behaviours

Using positive reinforcement methods doesn't mean you never say "no" to your cat. You just say it in a way she understands instead of using human language. **Either:**

- 🐾 **Avoid the situation.** Restrict your cat's access to a place, person, or object.
- 🐾 **Redirect** her to an acceptable outlet for her behaviour, for example pouncing on a toy instead of your shoe, or scratching her post instead of the couch.

For more about cat training and behaviour visit Karen Pryor's website, clickertraining.com, or Pam Johnson-Bennett's website www.catbehaviorassociates.com.

Kitten Socialization

Thorough, gentle socialization is key to raising a behaviorally healthy cat. Kittens need lots of affection and interaction from their family. Always handle your kitten with care (kittens are fragile), but definitely handle her. The more consistent, gentle petting she gets from you, the more friendly and easygoing she becomes.

Spend two or three sessions every day handling and petting your kitten. Talk to her in a soft voice and gently pet her all over her body, including ears and mouth. This will help her feel comfortable when the veterinarian needs to examine her. Likewise, massaging her toes and paws will put her at ease when claw-clipping time comes.

Like human babies, kittens need lots of naptime, so let her get her beauty sleep, no matter how adorable she looks. If your kitten squirms when you pick her up, don't force her to be held. Instead, let her continue to explore at her own pace—just plan to have more frequent, brief cuddle sessions. Don't let anyone over-pet her—especially on her stomach and back. This type of handling is uncomfortable for her and she may respond by nipping, swatting, or “bunny kicking.”

When you have guests visit, introduce them to your kitten. Getting to know a lot of people helps her understand that visitors are okay. Again, never force the issue. Lure her to interact with your guest by using a toy on a wand or stick, but otherwise let her choose whether or not to approach the guest.

Try to expose your kitten to people of different ages, sex, sizes, and ethnicity, as she can become fearful around people if she meets too few of them growing up.

Tip: Children in the household? Supervise all interactions and teach them to handle your kitten safely, respectfully, and appropriately.

WHEN PROBLEMS ARISE

Keep in mind that most of what we label “problem behaviour” is normal feline behaviour, and none of it is meant to spite or frustrate us. Your cat is simply being a cat.

Cats do what they do because they want food, play, attention, social time with us, etc. Pleasing—or annoying—us isn't part of the picture. Fortunately, you can use what your cat wants to train her to behave in ways you like. With patience and consistency, most problem behaviour can be changed for good.

Troubleshooting Problem Behaviour

LITTER BOX ISSUES

Can be due to:

- Undiagnosed illness
- Stress or anxiety
- Territoriality
- Soiled litter box
- Aversion to litter type
- Aversion to litter box location



My cat goes to the bathroom in the laundry basket, on my bed, or on the carpet.

If your cat squats to relieve herself anywhere other than the litter box, your first stop is always the vet's office to rule out a urinary infection or other medical reason. After that, systematically go through the guidelines on page 9 to eliminate stress triggers and find the right litter, litter box style, and litter box location for your cat.

My cat sprays urine on my front door/walls.

If your cat squirts urine on vertical surfaces, that's classic marking behaviour most often set off by stress or territoriality. The triggers can seem innocent to us: new furniture in the living room, a strange cat strolling through the yard, or social tension between feline housemates.

Clean marked locations thoroughly with enzymatic cleaners, and discourage stray cats from coming near your house. Try to identify stressors in your cat's life, then work to change or remove them; for example, blocking your cat's view of strange cats or confining your cats to separate parts of the home.

PLAY AND BITING/SCRATCHING

Can be due to:

-  Playful energy
-  Attention-seeking
-  Overstimulation

When I walk through the house, my cat pounces on my ankles.

Painful as this can be for you, it is normal play behaviour in cats. Redirect your cat's playfulness to an appropriate toy and consider having more interactive play sessions to give her other outlets for her energy. You can also put a bell on your cat's collar so you can hear her coming and redirect her before the assault.

When my cat is curled in my lap, and I'm gently petting her, she suddenly bites/scratches.

This is called petting-induced aggression or overstimulation. Your cat is trying to tell you about her tolerance level for petting, and the best cure is to watch and listen carefully. Look for subtle body language that signals overstimulation, like tail swishing, twitching ears, cranky meowing, staring, body stiffness, or hissing. If you see any of these signs, stop petting your cat. Over time, you'll be able to recognize her signals, and she won't be forced to escalate them. Also be careful not to pet your cat's belly or misinterpret the "elevator butt" (pushing the lower back upward) as an invitation to pet this area. Studies show most cats prefer petting on their heads and cheeks.

SCRATCHING OBJECTS

Can be due to:

-  Nails that need trimming
-  Territoriality
-  Stress relief and mood boosting
-  Stretching after a snooze

My cat scratches my new leather couch/the antique rug/my wicker chair.

This is another normal feline behaviour that can cause friction at home. The important thing to remember is that your cat has no concept of the value of things and isn't deliberately destroying your possessions. She's merely doing what comes naturally to her and feels good.

First, keep your cat's claws neatly clipped. Just like fingernails, claws grow continuously and must be trimmed every few weeks to every few months, depending on the cat.

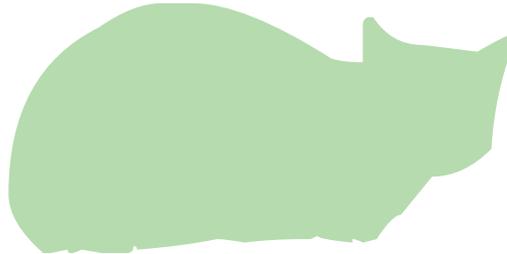
Second, make sure your cat has several sturdy scratching posts of varying textures. Place them strategically around the house, near items you don't want her to scratch. Temporarily cover any furniture she's already begun to scratch with an unattractive surface like Sticky Paws. If necessary, use treats or play to entice your cat over to the post (never carry her there or physically force her), and praise her lavishly when she uses it.

If you suspect territoriality is the cause, a spray such as Feliway®, which contains a synthetic copy of the facial pheromone cats use to rub on their territory to feel safe and secure, can help. To learn more, visit www.feliway.com.

FEARFULNESS

Can be due to:

- 🐾 Lack of socialization
- 🐾 Traumatizing events
- 🐾 Genetic predisposition



My cat hides when we have guests.

Many fearful cats do bond strongly with their caretakers over time, but many remain shy with strangers for life. If you have adopted a naturally fearful cat, she may never develop into the life of the party. To give a fearful cat the best possible life, follow these guidelines:

Provide plenty of cozy hiding places for her to hang out in when visitors come over. An option that works for many cats is a tall cat tree. Your cat might hang out in the same room as you and your guests if you give her a high spot to perch on while she watches the action. If you hold a big dinner party or have noisy work done to your house, confine your cat to her safe haven. Never pull her from her hiding place or force her to be held.

COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS

Myth: My cat scratches the couch or pees on the carpet out of spite. I know because she looks guilty.

Reality: When you return home to find scratch marks on the couch or a puddle on the living room carpet, it's easy to think your cat did those things because she's angry with you. But guilt is a wholly human concept. The "guilty" body language when your cat slinks away doesn't mean she feels bad about what she did—those were natural behaviours to her—it means she's reading subtle cues in your body language that tell her something is wrong. Don't take her scratching or urinating personally. Instead, try to figure out the real reason. Stress? Territoriality? An aversion to her litter box? It could be many things.

Myth: Rubbing my cat's nose in her urine or feces will stop her from soiling the house.

Reality: Absolutely not true. The only thing your cat will learn from this experience is to expect irrational and unpleasant behaviour from her human caretakers. In fact, just like newspaper swatting and scolding, it will likely teach your cat not to go to the bathroom in front of you, which makes it harder to persuade her to use only her litter box.

Myth: My old cat needs a friend.

Reality: While some cats are extremely social, many cats may prefer to be the only feline family member. Even if your cat has lived with a sibling or housemate for years, she may not want a new cat after losing a companion. Adding more cats to the household can be very stressful, particularly for older cats. If you do add a second or third cat, keep in mind that the best matches are made between cats of similar age, temperament, and energy level.

Myth: Cats can't be trained.

Reality: They most certainly can be. Cats are different from dogs and don't respond to many common dog training techniques. But just like chickens, dolphins, giraffes, and hippos, cats can indeed be trained. Integrating training games in your cat's everyday routine is a great way to enhance her well-being and quality of life.

Myth: Female cats don't spray/mark around the house.

Reality: Yes, the primary offenders when it comes to marking behaviour are intact males. But both neutered males and spayed females sometimes spray urine on vertical surfaces like doors, walls, and furniture. Most often, this behaviour springs from stress or territoriality—or a combination of both.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

We hope the information in this handbook will be helpful during your cat's transition into her new home. Toronto Cat Rescue strives to provide support to our adopters days, weeks or years after an adoption takes place. We are here to support you through the transition period that every cat goes through when they move into a new home. We also always take our cats back if their family can no longer keep them.

If you have any questions or concerns about your TCR adopted cat, please fill out the form on our website at <http://torontocatrescue.ca/adopt-a-cat/post-adoption-support> and a volunteer Post-Adoption Counselor will get back to you shortly

Manual adapted from the San Francisco SPCA: www.sfspca.org

