

THANK YOU FOR CHOOSING TO

# ADOPT

FROM DUPAGE COUNTY ANIMAL SERVICES

## Inside:

- The Do's and Don'ts of bringing home a new cat
- Choosing the right cat for you
- Caring for your cat
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- The problem with declawing your cat
- Dangers of letting your cat outside
- Introductions with other pets
- Tips for kittens
- Fearful cats
- Cat body language
- Pet owner FAQs
- Why cats bite



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# ✓ DO's and DON'Ts ✗

## OF BRINGING HOME YOUR NEW CAT

- ✓ Plan ahead and gather supplies.
- ✓ Make sure everyone in the household is prepared for the addition of a cat.
- ✓ Understand cats can be very independent. The fun of a new pet can only begin once your cat feels safe.
- ✓ Designate which room in the home will be set up for the cat to acclimate in.
- ✓ Establish who is responsible for which chores (box scooping, feeding, grooming, etc.) If they are under 13, make sure an adult will ensure the care is provided.
- ✓ Register your new cat's microchip ASAP.
- ✓ Pay attention to body language and take it slow. They may seem different than they did at the shelter. Your home with new people, sights, sounds, and smells may be overwhelming at first!
- ✓ Plan to take your new cat to the vet within the first few weeks of adopting.
- ✓ Prepare for a long-term commitment. The average cat lifespan is 15-20 years.
- ✓ Remove or relocate poisonous house plants someplace your cat cannot access.
- ✓ If you are adopting a kitten, consider adopting more than one.

- ✗ Don't expect your new cat to feel comfortable immediately. Remember, it will take time for them to feel safe.
- ✗ Don't let your cat out of its carrier on the drive home. We know it is tempting, but there are several things during a car ride that will scare your cat. It's best to leave them until you get home.
- ✗ Don't force interactions with your new cat. Let them come to you. Allow them to show you when they want attention. This will make the bond you create much stronger.
- ✗ Don't base your adoption only on looks. The prettiest cat may not fit best into your home. Try to look for the specific traits (lap cat, playful, companion for another pet, etc.) you want instead.
- ✗ Don't immediately introduce your new cat to other pets in the home.
- ✗ Don't leave children alone with the new cat and make it clear pets are not toys.
- ✗ Don't get upset or yell if your cat misbehaves.
- ✗ Don't be afraid to ask for help! DCAS is here to answer any questions or concerns you may have!

### Supply Checklist

- |   |   |                                     |                                  |
|---|---|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Food/water bowls | <input type="checkbox"/> Carrier                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Litter box | <input type="checkbox"/> Bed     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Enriching toys   | <input type="checkbox"/> Brush                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Cat Litter | <input type="checkbox"/> Scooper |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Scratching posts | <input type="checkbox"/> Nail clippers (optional) |                                     |                                  |



# THE CARE YOUR CAT RECEIVED FROM DCAS

## VETERINARY CARE



The DuPage County Animal Services' veterinarian examined your cat. During the exam, we determine their overall condition and age (if unknown), as well as the need for further testing or surgical care. This information is noted on the Feline Medical Record included in your adoption folder. Additionally, we ask you to take your new cat to your veterinarian within the first two weeks. Your veterinarian will review the medical record and guide you in future care.

## VACCINATIONS AND TESTING

Your cat received the Feline Rhinotracheitis-Calici-Panleukopenia (FVRCP) vaccine & Rabies vaccine (cats over 3 months of age). We also test for Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV) & Feline Leukemia Virus (FELV).



## PARASITE CONTROL



While we do not test each animal for internal parasites unless symptoms of infection are observed, your cat received some medications for parasite prevention. These cover internal & external parasites commonly seen in cats including fleas, ticks, roundworm, hookworm, tapeworm, coccidia, heartworm, and ear mites.

## MICROCHIP

Every animal leaves DCAS with a microchip because it significantly increases the chances of being reunited with your family if they are ever lost. The microchip is implanted under the skin in between the shoulder blades. It uses passive radio-frequency identification (RFID). Although it does not provide a real-time location like GPS, it does provide a permanent way to contact you. Think of it as an ID tag that can never get lost or fall off.



Remember to keep your contact information up-to-date with the microchip company when moving or changing phone numbers!

# CHOOSING THE RIGHT CAT

Before bringing a new cat home, think about what type of cat would best fit into your household.

There are several factors to consider:

- **What is your household's experience?**

- Many first-time cat owners believe a kitten is the best option. However, kittens require much more attention and a kitten-proofed home (they will get into EVERYTHING). A kitten's personality develops based on learning and genetics. They may develop a personality you did not plan on or are ready for. An adult cat with the right personality may be easier and more predictable. If you have the time and are willing to make the commitment, adopting a kitten is a fine choice.

- **Do you have children?**

- If your children are under 12, avoid skittish cats easily startled by loud noises and sudden movements.

- **What is your home like?**

- A small apartment may not suit a young, active cat. Likewise, a large house may not suit a fearful cat - too much space can be overwhelming, and they may hide a lot.

- **What is your lifestyle like?**

- Choose the right cat for your life. If your new cat will be alone all day, select an older, more independent cat. If you often have guests, adopt an outgoing cat who loves the extra attention. A shy cat will likely hide if you frequently entertain guests.

- **Do you have other pets?**

- If you have a cat-friendly dog - kittens, confident adult cats, or adult cats with a history of living with dogs will be your best options. Avoid declawed and/or fearful cats. Be prepared to make changes at home, such as blocking off the litter box or limiting your dog's access to certain parts of the house with gates.
- If you have another cat, choose someone close in temperament and age. For example, if you have a playful, active cat at home, adopt one who can tolerate or enjoy their energy. Consider cats with a history of living well with other cats or appear cat-friendly. It's important to realize no matter what you choose, it will take time for both cats to adjust and get to know each other.

- **What are you looking for in a new cat?**

- Always think about specific traits you are looking for. Many people want the cat to "choose" them, but cats are stressed in the shelter and may not show their true personality. Talk to the shelter staff and volunteers. They know the animals best and can point you in the right direction.



# BRINGING THEM HOME

Introducing a cat or kitten to a new home can be extremely stressful for them. A typical reaction is to run and hide. Ease the transition by following a few simple steps.

- **STEP 1:** Choose a "safe space" room in your house. Put all necessary items in the room (food, water, litter box, bed, toys, scratching post, etc.). Place food and water bowls as far away from the litter box as possible. A small bedroom, large closet, or bathroom (close the toilet lid!) will work. Set it up before your new cat arrives. The limited space ensures the cat knows where their litter box is and will prevent bolting out external doors.
- **STEP 2:** After adoption, bring your new cat immediately to the safe room. Open the carrier door and let the cat come out on their own. Often, a cat will stay in the carrier for several hours. If the cat comes out, leave the carrier in the room to give them a place to hide with familiar scents. Cardboard boxes are an easy and cheap hiding place to offer your cat.

- **STEP 3:** Leave the door closed; give your cat time to adjust to the smells and sounds of their new home first, before confronting a new physical environment. Visit frequently with your new cat. These visits can include play, petting, yummy treats or wet food, quietly reading a book, or chatting on the phone. Keep in mind, as a new cat becomes accustomed to you and your family, they may hiss, growl, twitch their tail, or pull their ears back. Do not force interaction with them. It's best to speak softly and give them some more time alone. When they are ready for attention, they will ask for it.
- **STEP 4:** When the cat is comfortable with this room (it may take a few days to a few weeks), open the door. Let them explore the rest of the home at their own pace. Keep the safe room door open so they can return to the safety of "their room" if they become overwhelmed. If you have other animals in the house, check out pages 14 & 15 for properly introducing them.

## CHILDREN AND CATS

Cats can be wonderful companions for a home full of kiddos, but it's still important to prepare for their arrival. Teach your children to have safe interactions with the cat. Always monitor your children around the new cat. Give your cat plenty of time and if they seem uncertain, provide them a safe hiding place away from the children. Incorrect play or handling could teach your cat to fear or dislike children. Make sure your children understand your cat is not a toy, and they should never chase them. Cats can be easily startled by loud noises or sudden movements. Try your best to keep kids calm and quiet while your cat is adjusting to their new home. Many cats do not enjoy being picked up or hugged. Depending on your children's age, you may need to set rules for them to follow when interacting with the cat (no tail pulling, poking, fur pulling, tummy rubbing, etc.).



# DAILY CARE

## FEEDING

Cats are carnivores, they should eat a diet high in animal protein. Whatever brand you choose, make sure to purchase the correct formula for the life stage of your cat because kittens, adults, and seniors have different nutritional needs.

Always provide fresh, clean water, and don't forget to wash their bowls regularly (to eliminate bacterial growth and spread).

Some cats graze throughout the day, and some eat on a schedule. Try different methods to find the best option for you and your cat.

### CANNED OR DRY? WHY NOT BOTH?

You know how everyone reminds you to drink more water, but you really don't want to. Well, telling your cat to drink more water is even less effective, but they need the reminder even more than we do. That's because, biologically, cats have a low thirst drive. Unfortunately, regular dehydration leads to kidney, bladder, and urinary tract diseases. Canned food is a great way to increase their water consumption and prevent urinary issues.

Kittens should have a few meals throughout the day, while adults and seniors are fine with one or two meals daily. The key is ensuring you give the proper daily portions, regardless of method. Most food packages recommend daily amounts based on your cat's weight. Consult your veterinarian if you're unsure.

Remember: obesity is a serious issue that causes health conditions like diabetes, heart disease, and osteoarthritis and can also prevent cats from doing basic daily tasks like grooming themselves.

## GROOMING

By nature, cats are pretty tidy and spend a lot of their time cleaning themselves. Bathing is generally not necessary, but brushing reduces shedding around the house and prevent hairballs. Cats with longer coats will require a little extra care because fur can quickly become tangled and painful.

Nail trimming provides many benefits and is required, even if your cat has access to a scratching board. Their nails become quite sharp over time, getting caught in blankets, carpeting, the couch, and you! That's because their nails grow and shed in layers. If neglected, nails can curl into their paw pads and cause a variety of problems. Nail trimming can often be done easily at home, but if you find your cat becomes difficult, groomers and veterinarians provide the service at a minimal cost.





## ENRICHMENT

This is a fancy word for expressing natural behaviors to stay busy, not bored. Each cat is different in the amount of enrichment they need to be happy and healthy. It can also change over their lifetime—kittens typically require more enrichment than adults and seniors, but not always.

Providing enrichment doesn't necessarily mean you are always doing something special for your cat. Our homes can provide enrichment naturally: perching on a windowsill allows cats to watch and listen to birds and squirrels. If that's not an option, they might enjoy a nature channel on the TV or a fish tank app.

Appeal to their smell and taste with fun treats like catnip, cat grass, and treat puzzles. Providing vertical space is often crucial for your cat's sense of security and relaxation. This could be a cat tower—which also gives your cat something appropriate to scratch—or even designating a piece of furniture by placing a soft bed on top.

Overall, providing enrichment relieves many problem behaviors and can be done on a budget. An internet search for "cat enrichment" can give lots of fun, homemade ideas to involve the whole family too. Check page 9 of this packet for even more ideas.

## THE LITTER BOX

Thankfully, cats naturally choose to use the litter box for elimination, but that does not mean there is only one method for every home. There are a lot of options to consider to find what works for you and your cat.

As people who share our home with our cat, we have some expectations regarding the box. We might want to hide the litter box from the main areas of our home (and cover it, too). But cats also have preferences, and sometimes we must compromise.

In general, have one more litter box than the number of cats in your home. One cat = two boxes, two cats = three boxes, etc.

Location, location, location! Privacy is good, but convenience is key. Avoid areas with noisy, scary appliances and cold cement floors. The litter box should be separate from your cat's food/drink area. The area must always be accessible to avoid locking your cat in or out of their bathroom. Convenience benefits you too. If the box is out of sight, it is easy to forget to scoop!

All litter boxes should be scooped and cleaned regularly. Urine and feces should be scooped DAILY. The number of cats and boxes and the type of litter you use determines how often you replace the litter. Generally, replace clay litter completely two times per week. Replace clumping litter, usually, every 1-2 weeks. Use mild dish soap to clean the box before refilling. Smelly cleaners (especially with ammonia or citrus) may turn your cat off using the box.

**Don't hesitate to call DCAS for guidance on any of your new cat's litter box habits.**

# WHY ISN'T MY CAT USING THE LITTER BOX?

Pay close attention to your cat's litter box habits to identify problems as soon as they begin. If your cat starts eliminating outside of their box, you need to act quickly, as there are several reasons why your cat may develop litter box problems. These problems can be complex and diverse, but treatment (either medically or behaviorally) can be effective. Some of the reasons your cat may stop using the box:

- **Underlying medical problem.** Taking your cat to the veterinarian should be the first step when you notice changes in your cat's litter box behavior. Some common problems are urinary tract infections, Feline Interstitial Cystitis, Bladder or Kidney stones, or a blockage. If your cat is suffering from one of these issues, they require medical attention.
- **Changes in the home.** Moving, a new baby or pet, or even changes in your daily routine can make your cat anxious, causing them to stop using the box. They need your patience and understanding while they adapt to these changes.
- **The litter box is not being cleaned or scooped often enough.**

- **If your cats are not getting along in the home,** it can cause enough stress to cause one or more of them to stop using the box. If this is the case, provide your cats with multiple sources of food, water, scratching posts, toys, and boxes. They will better be able to avoid each other and will not feel the need to compete over resources.
- **There is a chance something upset your cat while using the litter box and created a negative association with it.** They may be hesitant to enter the box or leave quickly. A common cause is if it becomes painful to eliminate. This could be due to an underlying medical problem or procedure, such as declawing, causing this pain.
- **Your cat prefers a certain litter type, box location, or the box is too small.**
- **Not enough litter boxes in your home.** (Remember: one box per cat, plus one).
- **Your cat can not always get to the litter box.** Physical limitations, as well as older age, could prevent your cat from reaching the litter box quickly enough or being able to climb into the box.
- **Your cat has an aversion to the scent of the litter:** most cats prefer unscented, clumping litter.
- **Your cat's litter box has a cover or liner that makes them feel uncomfortable.**
- **The litter in the box is too shallow or too deep:** most cats prefer one to two inches of litter.





# ENRICHMENT

Keeping cats happy and healthy sometimes means more than just providing them with a comfortable home and plenty of food. It is also important to enrich your cat's environment. Cats have natural instincts to forage and hunt. There are easy ways to entertain them so they do not end up bored or causing trouble. It's simple to do even in a small apartment or on a tight budget.

Foraging is searching for food. One way to play off this natural behavior is to divide your cat's meal into smaller portions and place them in different locations around your home. Your cat will have to search for their food. This is also a great trick if your cat eats too quickly.

There are a variety of different food and treat puzzles you can purchase for your cat, such as:



There are several DIY versions you can make yourself. Use toilet paper rolls by folding in the ends and putting treats inside. Put food or treats inside a muffin tin, ice tray, or egg carton and cover the top with pieces of crumpled paper, cardboard squares, or toys.



Check out [www.foodpuzzlesforcats.com](http://www.foodpuzzlesforcats.com) for more ideas.



It's no secret cats love boxes. Anytime you have an extra box, give it to your cat. They can be beds, tunnels, and mazes. If you feel creative, hang toys on the inside and cut various holes in the sides for your cat to play in. Hide treats inside for them to find.

Looking out a window can provide hours of entertainment for your cat (it's like television). Provide your cat with a spot near a window for endless enrichment. Make it even more fun by attaching a suction cup bird feeder to their window. Just be sure to leave the window closed so excited cats do not try to go through the screen.

If possible, provide your cat with a "catio" or cat patio, a safe, enclosed space outside. They can enjoy nice weather and watching nature without all the risks of letting them outside unattended. Or bring the outdoors in with a cat grass plant (available at most pet stores).

Researchers believe catnip targets feline "happy" receptors in their brain. However, when eaten, catnip has the opposite effect and mellows your cat out. You can get loose catnip or catnip toys but remember a little goes a long way. Too much and your cat could get overstimulated.

# PREVENTING UNWANTED BEHAVIORS

Cats are naturally inquisitive (it's part of what makes them cute), but curiosity can also lead to behaviors that annoy their people. Some examples are; scratching furniture and carpeting, jumping on counters and tables, aggressive play, excessive meowing, and attention-seeking in the middle of the night. Thankfully, there are positive ways to deter these behaviors if they become problematic.

For many cat owners, "**counter surfing**" is a bad habit they want to avoid. There are many attractions on tables and countertops for cats, but some simple steps can help avoid this behavior:

- Provide appropriate jumping spaces for your cat. Cats love heights and providing them with a cat tree or tower may be more desirable than the countertop. You can even hide treats on them to form positive associations with these surfaces.
- Keep your countertops clean. Crumbs, spills, or food left out may tempt your cat to jump up for a snack.
- Eliminate chairs or other furniture your cat is using to reach these surfaces.
- Try using sticky tape or aluminum foil around the edge of your counter. The texture or sound is undesirable for cats and may deter them from wanting to be there. Just keep in mind this method may disrupt the way you use your counter, be wasteful, and difficult to clean.

Cats meow for several reasons. It is one of the ways they communicate with us. They may be meowing to say hi, ask for something, or tell us something is wrong. If you feel like your cat is **meowing excessively**, check with your veterinarian to rule out any medical concerns. If there is no medical reason for your cat's vocalizations, try to determine why your cat is acting this way. If it's just to say hi, there isn't much you can do to change that. (You just happen to have a cat that is really happy to see you.) If they are doing it for attention, you can teach them you will only pay attention to them when they are quiet. Sometimes, cats cry because they are lonely and need a companion or to spend more time with you.



Most importantly, DO NOT scold or hit your cat for meowing. It might stop your cat at that moment, but it will not change meowing behavior. Instead, your cat will just become fearful of you, and that stress could lead to even more undesirable behaviors.

Some behaviors, such as **waking you up in the middle of the night**, are normal as far as the cat is concerned. However, we often describe this as a "bad habit." It's natural for young cats to be more active at that time, but it can be annoying to be woken up by your cat pouncing on you for play or waking you up at 4 AM for breakfast. Luckily, there are easy ways that do not involve punishment to solve this behavior.

- **Establish a routine and stick to it!** You do not need to feed your cat first thing when you wake up. Make some coffee or take a shower, for example. Feeding them first will only lead your cat to associate the reward of being fed with you getting out of bed and begin waking you earlier and earlier.
- **Cats need exercise no matter their age.** Daily playtime with you (for most cats two or more 20-minute play sessions) will strengthen your bond and help tire them out so they sleep better at night.
- **Mental stimulation.** Don't let your cat sleep all day! Check pages 7 & 9 to learn more about enrichment!
- **Try sleeping alone.** Give your cat their own room or close your bedroom door if they are keeping you up. As hard as it may be, ignore any crying on the other side of the door. It may take weeks for them to get used to sleeping alone.

**Scratching**, furniture or people, is an issue for most cat owners. However, it is a vital, natural behavior cats need to express. Because of this, it is important to encourage scratching in appropriate places.

Cats scratch to: remove the dead outer layer of their claws, leave their visual and scent mark on their "territory," stretch their bodies, and even express their excitement when you come home. Cats DO NOT scratch your furniture or drapes to be vindictive. Providing a more appealing alternative, like a cat tree, is typically enough to redirect their attention. If they are damaging your furniture, place the scratcher next to the object they are repeatedly using. Entice them by sprinkling loose catnip on it, playing with your cat around the scratching post, and giving your cat treats when they use (or even just sniff) the post. Once they are regularly using the post, you can slowly move it to its normal location in your home.

Observe your cat's scratching style to help choose a cat tree or scratching post they will enjoy. Cats have individual preferences (vertical, horizontal, angled, carpet, twine, cardboard, etc.). You may have to experiment before finding your cat's favorite. Whichever you choose, make sure it is sturdy and does not wobble.

Check out the next page to find out why declawing is NOT a solution to scratching.





# THE PROBLEM WITH DECLAWING YOUR CAT

DCAS does not recommend declawing your cat as we believe it can lead to both behavioral and medical complications. It is usually seen as a "quick fix" solution but can cause major problems in the future. To understand why declawing your cat can lead to future issues, you need to know why their claws are so important in the first place. A cat's paws support their whole body and help the cat balance. The paws (and claws) contain scent glands, blood vessels, and nerves. Cats use their claws to perform many natural and instinctual behaviors: stretching, exercising, playing, grooming, kneading, communication, stress relief, and defense.

Due to its inhumane nature, declawing is illegal in most of Canada, the UK, New York state, and many large U.S. cities.

Many believe declawing is "just removing the claws," but it is a major surgery involving several amputations. To ensure the claws do not grow back, the first joint and bone on each toe (where the claw grows) must be removed. Declawing changes the paw's shape, causing significant pain. After the cat fully heals, there is still risk of complications such as balance impairment and muscular weakness. Improper procedures risk the claws growing back or infection from bone fragments leading to more pain.

There are also potential behavior problems associated with declawing cats. Claws are cats' first line of self-defense. Declawed cats are more likely to bite because they cannot use their claws as a warning.



Additionally, declawed cats can develop litter box issues. They may associate pain they feel when covering their waste after the procedure with the litter box itself. They then seek a less painful place for elimination (such as carpeted floor, bathtub, or pile of clothes). Because their aversion to the litter box is a result of pain, it can be a difficult behavior to change.

## ALTERNATIVES TO DECLAWING

- Make inappropriate scratching areas unattractive to your cat. There are plenty of things that annoy cats to deter them from scratching carpet or furniture. Some swear by aluminum foil (the sound and texture are unappealing). Other options are sandpaper, plastic wrap, double-sided tape, or vinyl carpet runners (knobbly side up) placed on the furniture or floor your cat would stand to scratch.
- Regular nail trims - With the right equipment, a little patience, and some practice, it's not as hard as you may think. Trimmed nails cause less damage to furniture. Cat's nails are clear, so it is fairly easy not to cut too deep.
- Vinyl nail caps - talk to your veterinarian. If your cat does scratch something, they can't do any damage.
  - These are temporary and need to be replaced as your cat sheds the nail outer layers (about every 4-6 weeks).

# DANGERS OF LETTING YOUR CAT OUTSIDE

There are multiple risks of letting your cat outdoors. All DCAS adoptable cats should be kept inside after you bring them home. While it might seem like some cats want to go outside, it is safest to create a stimulating environment for them inside. Cats allowed outside by their owners, on average, live a shorter lifespan than cats kept inside. Some of these dangers include:

- Catching **diseases** such as Feline Leukemia, FIV, and Feline Distemper
- Catching **parasites** or infections such as fleas, ticks, mites, or ringworm
- **Fights or attacks from other animals** such as other cats, coyotes, loose dogs, foxes, raccoons, or sprayed by skunks
- Encountering **life-threatening chemicals** such as antifreeze or rat poison
- **Getting trapped or injured** in a neighbor's garage or window well
- Being **stolen or mistreated**
- Being **hit by a car**
- Increased chance of **ending up at your local animal shelter**
  - Cats can easily travel several miles from home and have a hard time finding their way back
  - It's estimated 3.4 million cats are brought to animal shelters nationwide!



## PREVENTING ESCAPES

For some cats, transitioning to a new home and an indoor-only lifestyle may be an adjustment. This is especially true if the cat was found outside as a stray or has lived outside in the past. Other cats find "door dashing" to be a fun game and can easily trip their owners rushing out the door. Here are some tips to keep your new cat safe:

- Avoid saying hello or goodbye to your cat next to the doorway. Instead, pick a spot away from the door for greetings and departures. This should be a spot in your home your cat likes, such as a perch on their cat tree. When you enter the home after being gone for some time, walk directly to that spot before saying hello to your cat. Say goodbye to your cat in this spot as well and distract them with a treat or toy when you leave.
- Make the exit areas unappealing to your cat by placing aluminum foil or double-sided sticky tape on the floor.
- Offer your cat plenty of alternatives. Cats are natural hunters and even when all meals are provided to them, they will still try to give in to that urge. Pages 7 & 9 have great tips on using your cat's natural instincts to keep them satisfied indoors.

In the event your cat gets outside, make sure the microchip information is correct and have them wear a breakaway collar with an ID tag.

# INTRODUCING YOUR NEW CAT TO YOUR RESIDENT CAT

Introducing a new cat or kitten to the family can be difficult, but well worth the effort in the end! Setting up the "safe room" for your new cat (see page 5) will make this process as smooth as possible. All cats benefit from a gradual transition. Have the new cat spend at least a few days in this space regardless of how quickly they adjust. After your new cat settles in, remove the carrier or bed and trade it for one your resident cat has been using. These items hold each cat's scent which they can investigate and acts as a subtle introduction between them.

For the next several days, your resident cat may be unhappy with the new addition to the household. They may demonstrate this by hissing and growling at the room where your new cat is. Over time, your cat will become accustomed to the new scents and begin to linger around the door.

The isolation period is important for both cats. During this time, your new cat will acclimate to its new environment, sounds, and smells. It helps your resident cat adjust to another cat's scent in their territory.

Next, give each cat the chance to switch living spaces. For 1-2 hours a day, the new cat should be allowed to roam the house, while your resident cat gets to explore your new cat's "safe room." This is another unique way to introduce them to each other's scents. Once the cats are back in their respective territories, place the food bowls on either side of the door to further their relationship.



When it is time for the cats to meet face-to-face, it is up to the cats to take the next step. Owners should expect a little hissing, swatting, and chasing - only intervene if it goes too far. Treats, toys, and yummy wet food go a long way to creating a positive experience during these introductions, not to mention a nice diversion should hissing or swatting occur. After completing this cautionary introduction period, hopefully, no intervention will be needed.

Be patient and give both cats plenty of time to adjust. Hissing and growling are normal first reactions (it's how they communicate). For the most part, you can let the cats work out their relationship on their own. Intervene if one cat is hurting the other or constantly chasing them. Do not scold your cats if they are not getting along right away. Do not get in the middle of a cat fight. It can be dangerous, and you will likely get bit. The best thing to do is startle them with a loud noise and then give them praise when they become distracted. Cats feed off our energy so if you become anxious, they are likely to as well. Be sure to give equal praise and attention to both cats.

It can take 2 weeks, 2 months, or longer for the cats to establish their relationship and live peacefully together in your home.



# INTRODUCING YOUR NEW CAT TO YOUR DOG

Introducing a new cat to your dog is similar to introducing them to other cats. Your new cat should go right into their "safe room" when you first arrive home. Your dog must know basic obedience before you bring a cat home (ESPECIALLY if your dog has never had cats in the home with them before).

Once your new cat is acclimated, have someone take your dog outside. Let your new cat out of the safe space to explore the home while your dog is gone. If no one can take the dog outside during this time, have your pets swap spaces. Your cat can explore the rest of the house at their own pace and your dog can explore the safe room.

Once your cat is comfortable in most areas of your house (you may need to have them swap places a few times), try introducing them. Give your cat a safe area by putting up a gate in the hall or doorway. Leave the leash on your dog's collar so you can easily pull them away if they become too excited or try to chase the cat. The gated-off area allows your cat a safe place if they feel uncomfortable. Do not force the animals to interact and let them set the pace.

Praise and encourage both animals for any friendly or positive behavior you observe. If your dog is lunging, growling, or extremely focused on your cat, put the cat back in their room and try again another day. Keep these initial introductions brief and repeat this process many more times as your pets become accustomed to one another.

Unsupervised interactions between the dog and cat should only happen after you have observed them interacting positively several times and you feel certain they will not harm each other. Never leave a kitten under 4 months alone with a dog. They are fragile, and your dog can easily hurt them (even if they are just trying to play).

If your dog is constantly staring at the cat or the door separating them from the cat, try to distract them. You can get them to break their focus with treats, a happy voice, or gently leading them away on a leash. Once the dog is away from the cat, offer them treats. Repeat this process until your dog is no longer focused on the cat or the door.

It is unlikely your dog and cat will become best friends (but not impossible). More likely, they will learn to coexist peacefully.

## WARNING SIGNS

If your dog remains overly focused, does not take their eyes off the cat despite your efforts, completely ignores you, or lunges suddenly as soon as the cat moves, it may be a dangerous match. If you are committed to making the relationship work, you may need the professional help of a trainer or behaviorist.



# EXTRA CARE FOR KITTENS



Like puppies (or children), kittens can cause a good amount of damage to themselves, and your stuff when left alone. We know it is almost impossible to watch over them 24/7 (even with how cute they are). This page has a few extra precautions to take when bringing these little ones into your home.

Kittens learn a great deal from their mothers. Take on her role and act like the "mother cat." For example, if your kitten gets into something they are not supposed to, momma cat does not punish or yell, that would just startle them. Mother cats pick up their kittens and move them to an appropriate area. Gently pick up your kitten and pet them when you put them down where they are supposed to be. This is very effective for kittens scratching furniture. Place them on or next to their scratching post and praise them when they use it.

Kittens use the litter box by instinct, but you can encourage them by placing them in the box after a meal or play session.

Kittens require exercise, socialization, and mental stimulation. Kittens 2-6 months of age are growing rapidly and have 3 times as much energy as an adult cat. They need plenty of kitten food to keep up with their growing bodies and plenty of outlets for their energy. Consider adopting two kittens to provide that for each other.

Many people use their hands when they play with their new kitten, but this can lead to behavior that stays with them into adulthood. Larger, adult teeth hurt a lot

more than kitten teeth. Prevent this by using toys instead. If your kitten scratches or bites you during play, redirect them to a toy.

Environmental enrichment, through play and training, makes a healthier kitten and an easier adult to live with. Active cats are less anxious, sleep more, and maintain a healthy weight. Regular active play, like with a wand toy, as well as multi-level cat trees can provide this. Check out page 9 for ideas on providing your kitten with enrichment.

"Kitten proof" your home before giving them access to your whole house. Clean up strings, rubber bands, ribbons, hair ties, paper clips, tacks, and other small items. It may be necessary to put childproof locks on cabinets. Cover exposed wire, put childproof plugs in unused outlets, and tie up blind and curtain cords. Move breakable items from tables and shelves (you'll be surprised how fast and high they can climb). Be cautious using recliners and when closing the dishwasher, washing machine, and dryer. Kittens get into EVERYTHING.

All kittens under four months of age require preventative medical care. This includes vaccinations and dewormers to prevent diseases such as distemper, feline leukemia, or internal parasites. Get your kitten to your veterinarian to check what additional medical care they recommend. If you choose a kitten from DCAS, the rabies vaccination is included in the adoption fee and an appointment will be scheduled at the time of adoption. Kittens over four months of age are fully vaccinated prior to adoption but they should still see your veterinarian shortly after adoption.

# FEARFUL CATS

Some cats and kittens, like those in the Bashful Buddies program at DCAS, need a little more patience and extra care to feel comfortable in their new home. Here are a few helpful tips if you decided to open your home to a shy cat.

Fearfulness in cats can be due to their genetic predisposition, a traumatic event (like losing their family and ending up in a shelter), or lack of socialization in their previous home.

These cats need to have their own "safe room" (described on page 5). When you first bring them home, put them in this safe space and let them come out of the carrier when they are ready. Never attempt to pull them out of the carrier or other hiding spot. At first, they might not approach you. Avoid staring at them, they can perceive it as a threat. They will ask for attention when they are ready. Start off only petting their face and neck. Full body pets can be invasive and we want to start slow. Just spend as much time in that room as you can doing other activities (bring your laptop or read a book). This shows them you are not to be feared and builds their trust by not forcing interaction. You can even leave a radio or television on in the room with the volume low. This will expose them to the normal sounds of your home and drown out other scarier noises.

Food can usually be used as a bonding tool. When you are spending time with your cat, give them yummy wet food or treats. At first, place them near your cat's hiding spot and move to the other side of the room. You can slowly move the food or treats closer to you until they will take it directly from you. Make sure everyone in the home is working with your new cat in the same way.

Once your cat has access to the house, ALWAYS leave the door to their safe space open and leave the litter box for a little while. If they get frightened or overwhelmed, they will most likely retreat to this space and it's good to keep the box nearby.

Most fearful cats will bond strongly with their owners, but some will remain shy with strangers for their life. Provide your cat with plenty of cozy hiding spots when you have guests over. If you are having a party or noisy work done at your house, confine your cat to the safe room.

Always do your best to pay attention to their body language and react accordingly. The next few pages show examples of how to interpret "cat talk."

Patience is KEY! Once you build a solid relationship with your scaredy-cat, they will return the favor with plenty of love!





# HOW CATS COMMUNICATE

During the first few months, you and your cat will get to know each other. Cats use nonverbal and verbal communication. Understanding how your cat communicates will smooth the transition into your home and build a lasting relationship with you and your family. Spend plenty of time observing your cat in different situations to get a sense of what your cat is feeling. Each cat is an individual and will express things differently. Look for clues provided by the look in their eyes, the tone of their voice, the position of their ears and body, and the motion of their tail. Always look at the entire cat and take into consideration what is going on around you.

## TAIL POSITION AND MOVEMENTS

Friendly,  
content



Non-  
threatening,  
but unsure



Quivering, very  
happy to see you



Hooked,  
friendly but  
unsure



Bristled, angry  
or threatened



Thrashing, angry  
or excited, easily  
irritated



Peaceful, not  
aggressive or  
threatened



Submissive,  
fearful



Defensive  
aggressive



Twitching, alert,  
interested



## EYES, EARS, AND WHISKERS

### RELAXED

Eyes: Closed to open,  
pupils normal slit size

Ears: Normal, forward

Whiskers: Normal,  
forward



### ALERT

Eyes: Open, pupils  
normal slit size

Ears: Normal or  
erected to front or back

Whiskers: Normal,  
forward



### TENSE

Eyes: Wide open,  
pupils partly dilated

Ears: Erected to  
front or back

Whiskers: Normal,  
forward



### ANXIOUS

Eyes: Wide open,  
pupils dilated

Ears: Partially  
flattened

Whiskers: Normal  
to forward or back



### FEARFUL

Eyes: Open, pupils  
fully dilated

Ears: Fully  
flattened

Whiskers: Back



### TERRIFIED

Eyes: Open, pupils  
fully dilated

Ears: Fully flat,  
back on head

Whiskers: Back



## VOCALIZATIONS

**PURR:** Generally, a purring cat is a happy cat. Sometimes cats purr to comfort themselves, so they could purr if they are stressed. Pay attention to body language to determine how your cat is feeling.

**TRILL:** Means your cat is curious. Cats may trill when they are interested in something or before exploring.

**MEOW:** If your cat requests something (like food or pets) they will hold their head high, keep their front feet together, and meow.

**CHIRP:** Cats hunting prey will chirp. In a home, cats often chirp when acting playful.

**HOWL:** Something is wrong. They may be sad, stressed, confused, or afraid.

**GROWL:** A growl is a warning sign from your cat before they take further action against the thing scaring them, such as swatting or biting.

**HISS:** If your cat is feeling threatened, they will hiss to communicate they are scared.

**YELP:** May yelp to express physical pain.

## CAT BODY LANGUAGE



RELAXED



PREDATORY



INTERESTED



FRIENDLY



ATTENTIVE



TRUSTING



PLAYFUL



EXCITED



FRIENDLY, RELAXED



CONTENT



CONFLICTED, CAUTIOUS



THREATENED



WORRIED



FRIGHTENED



"THIS IS MINE"



ANXIOUS



TERRIFIED



SUPER TERRIFIED



IRRITATED



DISGUSTED

# CAT OWNER FAQs

## HOW DO I PROPERLY SWITCH MY CAT'S FOOD TO ANOTHER BRAND?

Switching your cat's current food to another should be a gradual process. If you change too quickly, it can cause stomach pain and result in diarrhea. Allow 7 days for a smooth transition. On the first day, mix 75% old and 25% new food. Each day, gradually decrease the old and increase the new food. By day six, the ratios should be reversed and by day seven you can use only their new food.

## HOW OFTEN DOES MY CAT NEED TO SEE THE VET?

Adult cats should visit a veterinarian at least once a year for routine checkups and vaccinations. Kittens may need more visits for additional vaccines or care. Cats are very good at hiding their pain or discomfort and it could take the trained eye of a veterinarian to know if something is wrong. Many believe indoor-only cats are not exposed to the same risks as outdoor cats, meaning it is not as important to stay up to date on shots. However, ALL CATS need to stay vaccinated to protect you, your family, your cat, and any other pets in the home.

## HOW DO I KNOW IF MY CAT NEEDS A DENTAL CLEANING?

Signs it is time for your cat to get their teeth cleaned are bad breath, visible buildup or tartar, red and swollen gums, your cat is pawing at their mouth, sudden weight loss or change in appetite, difficulty eating, or frequent drooling. Ask your veterinarian if you notice any of these symptoms.

## IS HUMAN FOOD SAFE TO GIVE MY CAT?

Cats have different digestive systems than humans. This means some people-safe foods can be harmful to your pet. Familiarize yourself with dangerous foods such as chocolate, milk and dairy products, grapes, raisins, onions, garlic, and anything containing caffeine or alcohol. However, many human foods are safe for your pet in moderation. Human food should not be your cat's main source of nutrients and should only be given rarely as a treat. Always consult a veterinarian before giving a pet with health concerns (diabetes, weight issues, liver or kidney problems, etc.) human food.

## SHOULD I GET PET INSURANCE?

Pet insurance can be beneficial to help you cover expensive medical care in the future. There are many different types of insurance. Do your own research to determine what is best for you and your pet.

**IF YOU EVER HAVE OTHER QUESTIONS ABOUT CARING FOR YOUR CAT, DO NOT HESITATE TO CONTACT DCAS!**







# WHY CATS BITE

## and how to avoid being bitten



Cats may bite while playing, asking for space or defending themselves. Like many animal species, biting is a form of communication for cats. As a cat owner, it's important to recognize what may lead a cat to bite and how to prevent biting behavior.

### Body language speaks volumes

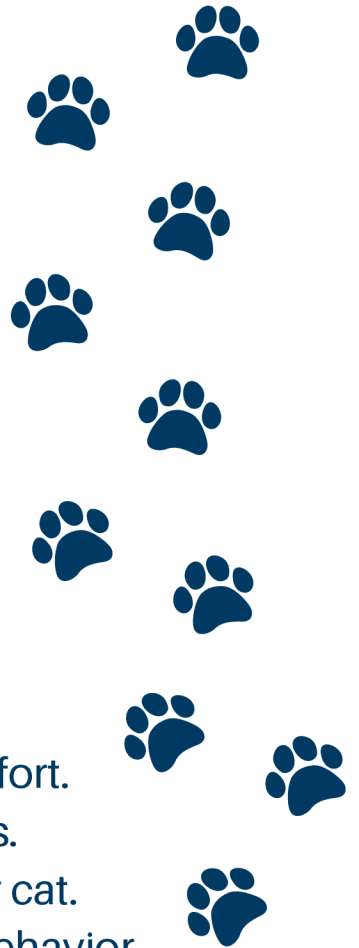
Observe your cat for these common warning signs:

- Cat's tail beginning to twitch.
- Ears turning back or flicking back and forth.
- Cat's skin rippling when petted.
- Low growling, agitated meowing.
- Dilated pupils, hard eye contact.

### Advocate for safety and prevent bites

A safe environment protects both people and animals

- Give your cat space if they show signs of stress or discomfort.
- Allow cats a safe, quiet place to be alone and decompress.
- Always supervise children and other animals around your cat.
- Never punish a cat for biting - this could increase biting behavior.
- Cats should never be left unattended outdoors or allowed to roam.



Notice a recent  
change in behavior?

Any changes in behavior should be discussed  
with your cat's veterinarian to rule out any  
underlying medical concerns.



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# WHY CATS BITE

and how to avoid being bitten



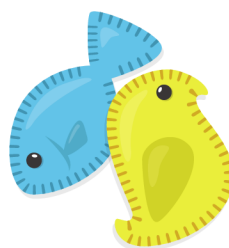
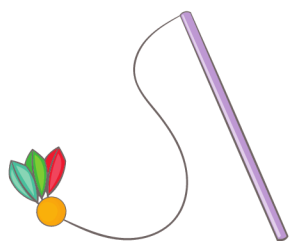
Just like people, cats have their own sense of "personal space." A safe interaction with cats means respecting boundaries and recognizing when to step away.

## Top tips for safe interactions

- Never attempt to handle a fearful or aggressive cat.
- Allow a cat the choice to interact. Never force a cat to be touched.
- Pet gentle and slow. Observe body language for signs of discomfort.
- Do not disturb a cat while they are eating, sleeping or grooming.

## Play it safe

- Use cat toys rather than your hands while playing.
- Structured play helps burn energy. Aim for 15-20 minute sessions.
- Provide a desirable treat afterwards to reward good behavior.
- Stop the play session if a cat becomes agitated or overstimulated.



*Provide a variety of options for both interactive and solitary play.*

Struggling with  
biting behavior?

Consider seeking help from a professional  
trained in cat behavior to address behavior  
concerns that are not medically related.



DuPage County  
**ANIMAL  
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Dear Adopter:

Thank you for adopting from DuPage County Animal Services. We are proud to be a part of the Hill's Food, Shelter, & Love™ program and we feed all our pets Hill's Science Diet.

We suggest you continue feeding your new pet Hill's Science Diet.

There are many benefits to keeping your pet on Hill's Science Diet:

- Continuity and consistency of food helps avoid the stress of switching
- While feeding Science Diet, you are offering your pet:
  - Vet's #1 choice to feed their own pet
  - Superior nutrition with visible results
  - Precisely balanced nutrition for every life stage and special needs
  - Natural ingredients, no artificial colors, flavors, or preservatives
  - Made in Hill's USA facilities (dry foods)

We are providing you a transition bag of Hill's Science Diet for your new pet. The transition bag is approximately 1 weeks' worth of food. There is also a \$5.00 coupon for your first purchase of any Hill's pet food product.

We also suggest you visit Hill's New Pet Parent website where you can access the following:

- Your "Best Friend Guide"
- Identify the best product for your new pet
- Additional coupons worth more than \$20
- <http://www.hillspet.com/new-pet-owner/new-pet-owner-dog.html> (new dog owners)
- <http://www.hillspet.com/new-pet-owner/new-pet-owner-cat.html> (new cat owners)

Thank you again from adopting from DuPage County Animal Services and when you choose Hill's Science Diet, you help our shelter and the Hill's Food, Shelter, & Love™ program!



We believe in  
Hill's Pet Nutrition



