



Tips for a Happy Homecoming – Cats

Congratulations on your new family member, and thank you for choosing to adopt from the Humane Society London & Middlesex! We've included information and resources in this package that we think will help to successfully integrate your new feline companion. If you are in need of support, advice, or further resources, please don't hesitate to reach out to our Adoptions Team (email: adoptions@hslm.ca). Additional resources referenced in this handout are available on our website (hslm.ca)

Entering a new environment can be quite stressful for cats. Individual cats vary greatly in their confidence level and how sociable they are with people and other animals. It can be completely normal for a cat to still be adjusting slowly after months in a new home. Your new cat is relying on you to provide patience and support during this transition.

First Things First (Before bringing home, or day of homecoming)

- **Supplies:** Purchase any necessary supplies and equipment
 - **Bowls:** Ceramic, glass or stainless steel, and big enough that their whiskers don't touch the sides
 - **Litterbox:** Extra large, uncovered litterboxes are recommended. If you plan to use a covered litterbox long term, provide both options initially and gradually transition
 - **Litter:** Start with what your cat was using in the shelter and gradually transition if you prefer a different litter long term
 - **Treats:** Recommend a low calorie tossable option, and a lickable treat (e.g. Catit, Churu)
 - **Toys:** Be sure to have a variety of toys, both for self-play and interactive play
- **Prepare a safe room:** Set up and cat-proof one room that your cat can be confined to for at least the first couple days
 - Keep other pets in the household out of this room
 - Provide multiple hiding places, but avoid inaccessible hiding places (e.g. holes in wall, inside furniture, etc.)
 - Consider a calming pheromone spray or diffuser
 - Remove or prevent access to any strings, ribbon, tassels, fringe, or laces
 - Remove any toxic plants, and non-toxic if you don't want them chewed/damaged
 - Remove any fragile items that may break if knocked over/off of surfaces
 - Check stability of window screens or keep windows closed
 - Move or cover/protect any electrical cords (especially for kittens)
 - Check stability of furniture, shelves, TV/monitors to ensure they won't fall onto your cat

Making Your Home More Cat Friendly

- **Vertical space:** Cats love opportunities to play, observe, and rest on raised surfaces! These can be created by crates/bins, furniture, shelves, ledges, as long as they are secure and non-slip.
- **Hiding spots:** Since cats are prey animals it's important for them to have spots to hide (can be purchased, made out of boxes, or drape a blanket over a chair)
- **Multiple water sources:** Replace water daily, consider fountain as cats are drawn to moving water
- **Multiple litterboxes:** Ideally # of cats in household + 1 = # of litterboxes and for multi-level homes at least 1 litterbox on each floor
- **Scratchers:** Provide multiple types of scratching posts/furniture (experiment with material, orientation, and location)
- Prevent access to toxic and hazardous items in the home by putting them away out of reach or blocking off access to that area of the house by keeping doors closed
- Review our "Cat Enrichment Guide" and have some activities prepped. Be sure to supervise your new cat with any enrichment activities at first to avoid ingestion of non-food parts



The First Week

Do:

- Clean litterbox at least once daily
- Allow short, supervised exploration outside of their safe room to explore the rest of the home (with any other household animals put away, prevent access to any inaccessible hiding places)
- Build trust and positive association with human household members through letting your new cat approach them and initiate petting or play on their own terms, playing treat toss games, trying to engage with a wand toy, or sitting quietly with the cat in their safe room
- Provide multiple opportunities daily for play sessions and enrichment activities
- Choose a veterinary clinic and schedule an initial appointment for sometime in the following weeks with the veterinarian you will be using for your cat (see your vet sooner if you have any medical concerns)

Avoid:

- Allowing access to the whole house and expecting them to return to the safe room to use litterbox
- Forcing interactions and handling on your new cat unless essential for their safety or wellbeing
- Introducing friends and family who don't live in the home
- Introducing to other pets in the home
- Stressful events or appointments unless essential (e.g. grooming, long car trips, gatherings at your home)

The Next Several Weeks

Do:

- Watch for behaviour changes and any undesirable behaviour or problems that appear as your cat settles in more
- Start to introduce your cat to other pets in the household – see “Cat-Cat introductions”, “Cat-Dog introductions”
- Increase access to the rest of the home as your cat gains confidence and as introductions to any other pets in the household progress
- Slowly begin to include basic grooming to your cat's routine (brushing coat, toothbrushing, nail trimming etc.), and get them introduced to and scheduled with a professional groomer as necessary
- If planning to let your cat have access to outdoors on a harness or enclosed patio, start to gradually introduce
- Monitor Body Condition Score (see scale included in Royal Canin package) and speak with your vet about weight loss strategies as necessary (many of us think a healthy lean cat looks “skinny”)
- If your cat has stopped spending as much time in the safe room, move resources from safe room to other areas of the home

Avoid:

- Vacation or travel for multiple days at a time
- Hosting large groups of people, loud sounds, renovations

The Next Few Months

Many cats will be fully adjusted by this time and you will have a pretty good understanding of their personality, quirks, and behaviour. If your cat is still struggling on a daily basis with feeling comfortable in their safe room, the rest of the home, human family members, or other pets in the home, please reach out to our behaviour team (behaviour@hslm.ca) or a qualified behaviour consultant – See Toronto Humane Society's Cat Training & Consultation services – <https://www.torontohumanesociety.com/pet-services/training-and-behaviour/cat-training-and-consultations/>

