



Tips for a Successful Relationship with Your Cat

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INTRODUCTION

Congratulations!

You have just added a new member to your family. Your journey with your new cat will be filled with incredible joy and a lifetime of companionship.

The following is a reference as you and your new cat get to know each other. If there is any information you need that is not contained in this booklet, please contact the experts at Bideawee.

Bideawee is committed to supporting and cultivating the lifelong relationships between pets and the people who love them and provides pets and people the following services to help your lifelong journey together:

Adoption
Behavior & Training Services
Pet Therapy Training and Outreach
Veterinary Medicine
Dog Park
Memorials
Bereavement Counseling
Estate Planning

ADOPTING FROM THE ADOPTION CENTERS AT BIDEAWEE

The Adoption Centers at Bideawee take great care in screening animals for good health and temperament. However, since cats are living and breathing beings there are no guarantees of good health and temperament. Bideawee can only inform you of what has been reported to staff and what has been witnessed at Bideawee.

The veterinarians at the Animal Hospitals at Bideawee care for all Bideawee animals on a daily basis to ensure good health. However, since multiple animals are being housed together there is always a risk of the spread of common illnesses. Adopters will always be informed of any known illness.

Group living in an adoption center environment is stressful, and the move from the Adoption Centers at Bideawee to your home may be stressful as well. Group housing with a population of animals that changes daily combined with the stress of moving to a new home may make your new cat susceptible to catching an Upper Respiratory Infection (URI), more commonly known as a cold. These treatable colds may develop after your cat has been in your home for a few days. This is something

to watch for in your new cat. If you have other cats at home already, it is a good reason to keep them separated from your new addition at first.

Each cat is different and unique and part of the fun will be to see how your cat's personality emerges over time as she becomes comfortable in your home. Remember to be patient during the first few days of the adjustment period.

Part of Bideawee's mission is to match the perfect pet with your family. It is important to us to help to find forever families for our homeless pets. For this to happen we want to provide all of the tools for you to have a happy and healthy relationship with your pet.

We hope you will find the following information useful whether or not you have owned a cat in the past or currently have one at home.

INTRODUCING YOUR NEW CAT TO YOUR HOME

It will take awhile for your cat to adjust to her new environment, so when you arrive at home we recommend keeping her in one room for a few days until she feels comfortable. You can then slowly expand access to the whole house.

Be sure to show your cat where her food, water and litter box are located. Keep the litter box as far away from the food and water as possible.

Another thing that may help your cat feel comfortable is to leave the Bideawee carrier in the room. The carrier has the cat's scent in it, and it will give her a comfortable and secure place to sleep or hide.

If you have other cats, the best way to help prevent them from getting a cold is to keep them separate for the first two weeks.

INTRODUCING YOUR NEW CAT TO YOUR OTHER PETS

All cats are territorial by nature. To give time for each animal to adjust to sharing a mutual territory, they should be introduced slowly to the other cats already living in your home.

Cats should initially be kept in separate rooms. To begin the introduction process, we recommend first switching the cats' beds so each one can smell the other's scent. The next step is to allow the cats to meet each other. They are likely to avoid each other, even run from each other initially. This is normal behavior.

The best thing to do is to observe and supervise but leave them alone to figure out the relationship. It's important not to force them. It is unlikely that you will need to intervene to separate them, but it's a good idea to have a towel handy in case your intervention is needed.

CATS AND KIDS

Growing up with cats can be a wonderful and rewarding experience. Here are some tips to help you, your new cat, and your kids get to know each other.

- Teach your kids how to properly handle a cat by picking her up gently, supporting the cat's hindquarters in one hand and her chest with the other hand. The cat should be held gently but securely close to your body.
- Tell children that just like them, the cat doesn't want to be disturbed while she is eating, sleeping, or in the litter box.
- Watch your kids with the cat before you leave them alone together. Children under the age of five should never be left alone with pets.
- Discourage cats from play biting and swatting of paws when interacting with children. Instead show the children how to use cat teasers to allow the cat to play.
- Teach children the importance of keeping the cat inside.
- Tell children that like them, cats don't want to be teased.
- Share the responsibility of caring for the cat with your children.

USING BASIC CAT SUPPLIES

Litter Box and Scoop

- Fill the litter box about 1/3 of the way, making sure that there is enough litter to cover the bottom of the pan.
- Show your new cat where the litter box is the first time you take them into the house. Do the same every time you move the litter box to a different location.
- Keep the litter box clean so the cat will use it every time. A dirty litter box may deter them from using it.
- Kittens generally houstrain themselves. Show them where the box is located and they pretty much do the rest. However, because of their age, accidents may happen.

- If your kitten starts to have accidents you should leave the kitten in a smaller area with the litter box, food, and water while you are away during the day so that they cannot wander too far from the litter box. Do this for two or three days and you should be able to give your kitten the run of the house without problems shortly thereafter.
- Clean the litter box completely at least once a week: empty out the litter and waste, rinse and clean with soapy water. Dry the litter box and refill it with fresh litter.

Common Causes of Litter Box Issues:

- Litter is not cleaned often enough.
- Your cat is showing signs of a medical problem.
- The cat may have been startled by a loud noise, other animal, or a child while using the litter box.
- The cat may associate the litter box with punishment.
- The cat may not be used to the type of litter you are using.

What If You Catch Your Cat Going to the Bathroom Outside of the Litter Box?

- Make a noise to interrupt what your cat is doing but do not scare her.
- Put your cat on the floor in front of her litter box.
- If your cat walks into the litter box, wait and praise her after she goes to the bathroom with petting, treats or toys.
- If your cat walks away from the litter box, then wait and watch from afar to see if your cat returns to the litter box. Some cats may just want some privacy.
- Because cats like to return to where they go to the bathroom, make sure to clean the area thoroughly. Pet stain removal sprays can be found at most pet stores.

Litter

- There are many different brands and types of cat litter. Try a couple to see which one you and your cat like best.
- Clumping litter hardens when wet – this makes it easy to scoop.
- Some pellet litters turn into sawdust when wet. Scatter tends to be less messy and it is dust free.
- Some litters are even flushable.
- Litter can be found at most pet stores, supermarkets, and some department stores.

Food Dishes

Ceramic or metal bowls are recommended. They are easier to clean and absorb fewer bacteria.

Food & Water

- Kittens should be fed food specially formulated for them until they are a year old. Kitten food tends to be higher in calories than adult food. Kittens should get a 'free lunch' -- they should have access to food at all times.
- Cats and kittens should have access to fresh water all the time. Senior cats should be encouraged to drink a lot of water to help keep their kidneys healthy. Encourage your cats to drink more water by supplying them with a fountain bowl or by placing several bowls of water around the house.
- Dry food is good for tartar control.
- Do not give milk to your cat. They do not have the proper enzymes to digest it, and they may get diarrhea.
- Buy the highest-quality food you can afford. Lower-quality foods may cost you less today, but they can increase your cat's chances of developing health problems in the future. Higher quality foods are generally only found at pet stores and veterinary practices.
- Obesity is a serious health problem in cats. **Ask the veterinarians at the Animal Hospitals at Bideawee or your veterinarian to help you determine the ideal body weight for your cat and adjust your cat's diet to attain and maintain that weight according to your veterinarian's suggestions.**
- A word about food boredom: It's not uncommon for cats to tire of the same old thing day in and day out. Provide variety in the form of different flavors and textures. Always gradually introduce any new brand of food to prevent digestive upset.

Brush & Comb

- A well-groomed cat is a happy cat. Get your cat used to being brushed while your cat is young to make this an easy task when she grows up.
- Failure to groom may result in matted fur. This is uncomfortable for your cat and sometimes causes open sores on the skin. If your cat gets matted you may have to get her shaved completely if the mats cannot be combed out.
- Grooming your cat cuts down on shedding.
- Combs are recommended for medium to long haired cats.

Nail Clippers

- Keep your cat's nails trimmed to prevent the destruction of your property and accidental scratches to you or your children during play.

- Get your cat used to having her nails clipped while she is young so that it will be an easy task for you when she is fully grown. One way to do this is to play with her paws often between nail clippings.
- Nail clippers designed for cats can be found at most pet stores, some supermarkets and department stores.

Toothbrush & Toothpaste

- That's right; your cat needs dental care too!
- Use a baby toothbrush or one made for animals. Toothbrushes made for animals can be found at most pet stores and veterinary practices.
- Special animal toothpaste comes in various flavors that your pet will enjoy such as turkey and poultry.
- Get your cat used to weekly brushings while she is young to make it an easy task when she is fully grown. This may take time but don't give up as proper dental hygiene will prevent long term dental health issues .
- Toothpaste can be purchased at the Animals Hospitals at Bideawee or at your veterinarian's office and most pet stores.

Toys & Treats

- Cat teasers are recommended to correctly tap into the cat's normal prey drive.
- Laser pointers and games that make the cat think harder can provide endless fun for your cat too.
- Don't let your cat play with anything small enough that she can choke on.
- Avoid toys with tinsel – a cat may eat it and it can get blocked in her intestines.
- Keep your cat away from yarn and ribbon. She may chew and swallow it.
- Cats will make toys out of everything. Cat-proof your home.
- Make sure that the strings on window blinds are out of reach.
- A toy or treat is not safe for your cat just because a pet store sells it. Be selective and read any cautionary notes when available in the package of the toy or treat.

Scratch Pole

- It is a cat's nature to sharpen her nails. Provide your cat with a scratch pole so that she does not scratch your furniture and carpets.

KEEPING YOUR NEW CAT SAFE

Keep Identification on Your Cat at All Times

- Cats that like to explore may accidentally sneak out of the house. Cats should wear proper identification just in case of an accident or disaster. A simple ID tag can guarantee her safe return home.
- Don't forget to keep your information on the tags up to date. It's a good idea to include your mobile phone number on it so you can be contacted at all times.
- Keep a tag on your pet when you leave her with a pet sitter just in case an accident occurs.
- 'Safety' collars or stretchy collars are recommended just in case your curious cat or kitten may get the collar stuck in something. A 'safety' collar has an easy release clip that will allow the collar to come right off. A stretchy collar will stretch enough to allow the cat to slip out of the collar. A microchip is highly recommended for all cats to have as a back-up ID to the collar and tags.

Your New Cat is Microchipped. Microchipping All of Your Pets is Highly Recommended.

- Your new cat is microchipped. It is highly recommended that you have all of your pets microchipped. The Animal Hospitals at Bideawee in NYC and Westhampton offer low cost microchipping. Call 866-262-8133 for more information.
- A microchip is a tiny computer chip which has an identification number programmed into it. The chip is about the size of a grain of rice. The microchip is injected under the skin at the base of the neck. Once your cat is injected with the chip, she can be identified throughout her life by this number. Her identification cannot be lost, altered or removed.
- When a lost animal is surrendered at an animal shelter or veterinarian, a special scanner is used to send a signal through the skin of the animal to read the chip. The animal feels nothing as the scanner is passed over her. The microchip sends its number back to the scanner. When the number appears on the scanner, a phone call to an 800 number will give the finder the name and contact information for the registered owner of the pet.
- Any pet can receive a microchip. Dogs, cats & ferrets are the most common recipients but bunnies, birds, and farm animals can get them too.

Have a Pet Sitter?

- Always provide your pet sitter with a list of emergency numbers. This should include places to call if your pet should get lost or hurt.
- Tell your pet sitter to always keep tags on your pet.

Your cat should be kept indoors. Letting your cat outside will expose her to dangers that she cannot protect herself against.

Keeping Your Cat Indoors Will:

- Protect your cat and family against deadly diseases such as rabies.
- Protect your cat against deadly feline diseases such as feline leukemia.
- Protect your cat against wild animals.
- Protect your cat against moving vehicles.
- Protect your cat against strange people that may intentionally hurt animals.

Dangers of Letting Your Cat Outdoors:

- Being hit by a car.
- Ingesting a deadly poison like antifreeze or a pesticide.
- Being trapped by an unhappy neighbor.
- Being attacked by a roaming dog, cat, or wild animal.
- Contracting a disease from another animal.
- Becoming lost and unable to find her way home.
- Being stolen.
- Encountering an adult or child with cruel intentions.

KEEPING YOUR NEW CAT HEALTHY

Choose a Veterinarian

- The Animal Hospitals at Bideawee with offices located in NYC and Westhampton accept private clients and provide access to the same veterinary medical team that managed your cat's healthcare needs before you adopted her. The experts at the Animal Hospitals at Bideawee can provide care ranging from general wellness through complex specialized surgeries. To reach the Animal Hospitals at Bideawee please phone 866-262-8133 during the Animal Hospitals' business hours.

- If you live out of the area, ask your friends that are pet owners for a reference and research available veterinarians online to find a veterinarian in your area that is right for you.
- Don't wait until your cat gets sick to find a veterinarian. Veterinarians, like physicians, all have different styles and approaches. To find one that best suits you and your cat's needs you should have the veterinarian meet your pet when your cat is healthy. This gives you the opportunity to have an open dialogue about your expectations regarding care for your cat with your new veterinarian.

Finish Up Her Series of Vaccines

- Your cat may require some booster vaccines. The information can be found in your cat's medical record.
- Vaccinations should be updated annually by your veterinarian.
- According to state law, all cats must be vaccinated against rabies regardless of whether they go outside.

Detecting Illness in Your Cat

- **Early warning signs:** Not greeting you when you get home or not demanding attention (if she is a needy kitty), not wanting food, or acting withdrawn or depressed may be signs your cat is getting ill. Hiding is also something cats do when they are not feeling well.
- **More specific worry points:** Not eating or drinking at all or less than normal, vomiting and/or diarrhea are symptoms of gastro-intestinal distress. It may not be serious (we have all had the 24 hour stomach bug), but can become serious. Coughing, sneezing, gagging or retching in excess may indicate an upper respiratory infection. Shaking the head excessively may mean an ear infection or mites. Constant scratching can indicate mild skin infections, fleas, ringworm, or mange. Limping indicates something hurts and can range from a mild muscle strain to a more complex orthopedic disease. *Never give your cat aspirin (or any other medication) unless prescribed by a vet.*
- **When to call the vet:** straining to urinate, labored breathing, restlessness, hiding, anorexia, and/or vomiting and/or diarrhea for more than 24 hours, abdominal discomfort, bleeding from anywhere, refusing to get up, or ANY time you are concerned!

WHAT TO DO IN CASE OF AN EMERGENCY

Prepare for Emergencies!

- Have a picture of your new cat handy just in case your cat gets lost so that you can make lost flyers to post around your neighborhood. Make sure your cat always has identification tags on her with your mobile phone number so that you can be contacted quickly.

Keep a List of Emergency Numbers Handy Just in Case Your Cat Gets Hurt or Lost.

- Veterinarian's office
- Animal Hospitals at Bideawee
- 24-hour animal hospital
- Your local animal shelters
- Call the Adoption Centers at Bideawee to report your lost cat

COMMON FELINE BEHAVIORS

Fearfulness

- A shelter environment can be very stressful, and the move from one place to another may add stress as well. Have patience and be understanding about the stresses of moving and give your cat time to adjust to her new environment.
- Some cats are fearful in their new homes. Again, patience and understanding are important during the adjustment period. Your cat will become more confident after she gets comfortable in your home.
- Your new cat may get nervous or want to hide. If she seems nervous keep her in one room when you are not home. This enables you to keep track of her if she chooses to hide. It helps ease your new cat's anxiety if you provide a comfortable hiding place.
- Fearful behaviors may disappear once your cat feels more comfortable in a new environment.

Scratching Furniture and Carpets.

- Give her the option to use a scratch pole and keep her nails trimmed.
- If you see your new cat scratching your furniture, tell her "no" and take her to the scratch pole. Praise her when she uses the scratch pole or stops scratching when told "no".

Shedding

- Cats shed throughout the year but usually more during the hot months.
- Regular brushings help control the problem but expect your cat to shed.

Hairballs

- Some cats are more susceptible to hairballs but it can happen with indoor, outdoor, shorthaired, and longhaired cats. Your cat may cough up hairballs as a result of constant self-grooming. Some typical signs of hairballs in cats are:
 - Gagging
 - Dry coughing from deep inside (strange noises made through the nose and throat, almost like a muted cough)
 - Occasional vomiting
 - Eating small quantities of food at a time
 - Weight loss, or even a complete loss of appetite
 - Constipation
 - Regurgitation of undigested food right after it is eaten
- There are hairball prevention food, treats, and lubricants that can be found at most pet stores.

ESTATE PLANNING FOR YOUR CAT

We all consider our children when doing estate planning but often forget to include plans for our pets. Some things to consider when doing estate planning for your cat(s):

- Find a guardian you trust who will care for your cat. This person should make a commitment that they will treat your cat just like a family member. You should tell this guardian that you are making them your cat's guardian in your will to ensure that they understand the obligation that goes with this responsibility.
- Create a trust for your cat so that there will be money available for the guardian to care for her (food, veterinary care, etc.) so that your cat does not become a burden for the guardian.
- Consider what you would like to happen to your cat in the unfortunate event of their passing, and make arrangements beforehand so that you are well prepared. If you would like more information about how to do this, The Pet Memorial Parks at Bideawee have memorial parks and cremation services available. Contact the Pet Memorial Parks at 866-262-8133 for more information.
- If you cannot find a suitable guardian, contact our Planned Giving department at 212-532-6395 for other options.