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Introducing a Cat to a New Home

Your new feline friend needs time to adjust to a new environment. Cats are creatures of habit and do not like change, even if it is a change for the better! So it is best to take it slow and let them acclimate in their own time frame.

Set up a room away from the main activity centers of the home, a bathroom or spare room is good. Put their litter box, food, water, and a bed in there. (Place all these items with some distance between them. After all, you do not eat, sleep and eliminate all in the same small space.) Also place some toys in there. Let them acclimate to this room first. Spend some time in there with them and play with them to start establishing a bond. String toys should only be used under supervision, and put away after the play session is over.

If possible find out what type of litter the cat is used to, and provide that type, be it regular or scoopable. Most cats do like scoopable litter because of the finer texture. You may also have to experiment with different types of boxes such as covered or open. In any case most cats will adapt to a different box and litter as long as it is clean, and kept clean.

Also try to find out what brand of food the cat has been eating. Sometimes switching food too quickly can cause diarrhea. You should provide a premium cat food like Hills, Iams or ProPlan to promote good health. Cats on premium diets exhibit a lush glossy coat that is an indicator of overall good health.

Grooming is another way of bonding with your new cat. If the cat enjoys being petted chances are he or she will enjoy being brushed. Choose a grooming tool appropriate to the length of the fur. Start out slowly and gently and just do a little at a time. Let your cat guide you. If your lucky they will rub up against the brush and start purring and won't want you to stop. Depending on the length of the coat, establish a regular grooming schedule. Longhaired cats such as Persians may need to be brushed daily. Shorthaired cats may only need a quick brushing once a week. If possible, inquire about the cat's grooming needs before you adopt. Make sure you can make the time commitment.

After a couple of days allow the cat out to explore the new home. Continue to allow easy access to the haven if the cat gets nervous and needs to retreat. If you wish to move the litter box and food and water dishes to another permanent location, set up a second box and dishes in the permanent location and keep both available for a few days. Remove the old when you are sure your cat is using the new area.

Cat proof your home the same way you would toddler proof it, with the exception that cats can jump about five feet in the air. For the most part, cats are highly agile and graceful, but it is best not to leave a priceless heirloom out where it might accidentally get knocked over.

If you have young children or dogs, make sure the cat can retreat to a safe area, where it is not trapped. Use baby gates to create a safe space if necessary.

Buy a sturdy scratching post, and show it to your cat. A vertical post with a perch on top and an inexpensive horizontal corrugated cardboard scratcher are two good investments. The cat is bound to use one. If the cardboard is preferred, you still have a nice perch for kitty. If the perch is preferred, the cardboard scratcher was inexpensive. The cardboard scratchers come with catnip. If your cat responds to catnip, rub the vertical post with it to encourage its use.

Some people may think that taking these steps is a lot of trouble. But by providing a proper introduction to your home you create a happy, stress free environment for your new cat and yourself.