

Guide for the arrival of your cat or kitten

Welcoming a cat into your home is a wonderful and life-changing experience, both for the animal and his human companion. We are very happy you decided to open your home (and your heart!) to a rescue cat/kitten.

We've put together some tips which will help you understand your cat's needs and help your furry friend settle well with you.



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1. Introductions



Depending on your cat's character, you will need to introduce him to his new home gradually, as getting accustomed to a totally unfamiliar environment can be very scary and overwhelming for your new family member.

Before your cat's arrival, put his food and water bowls, bedding and litter box in the same room. Choose a quiet small room, if possible. Release your cat there, sit quietly and observe his reaction.

If your cat is curious and already rubs himself against the furniture, you can start opening the doors to other rooms for him.

If he is fearful and is hiding under the furniture, you will have to wait a few days for the cat to be more comfortable before introducing him to the rest of his new home.

In the meantime, spend as much time as possible in the same room with the cat, alternating between interaction (playing, petting, putting him on your lap if the cat allows) and inactive presence (let your cat explore, eat, rest while you are in the room).

If your cat is still shy, avoid making sudden movements or grabbing him from above, instead sit down beside him and reach out slowly. Using a pheromone diffuser can soothe some of the most anxious cats.

Above all, please be patient and gentle: while most cats will be comfortable and confident in their new home within a couple of weeks, for some it can take several weeks to fully adapt to their new life. Playing is a great way to make your cat less stressed.



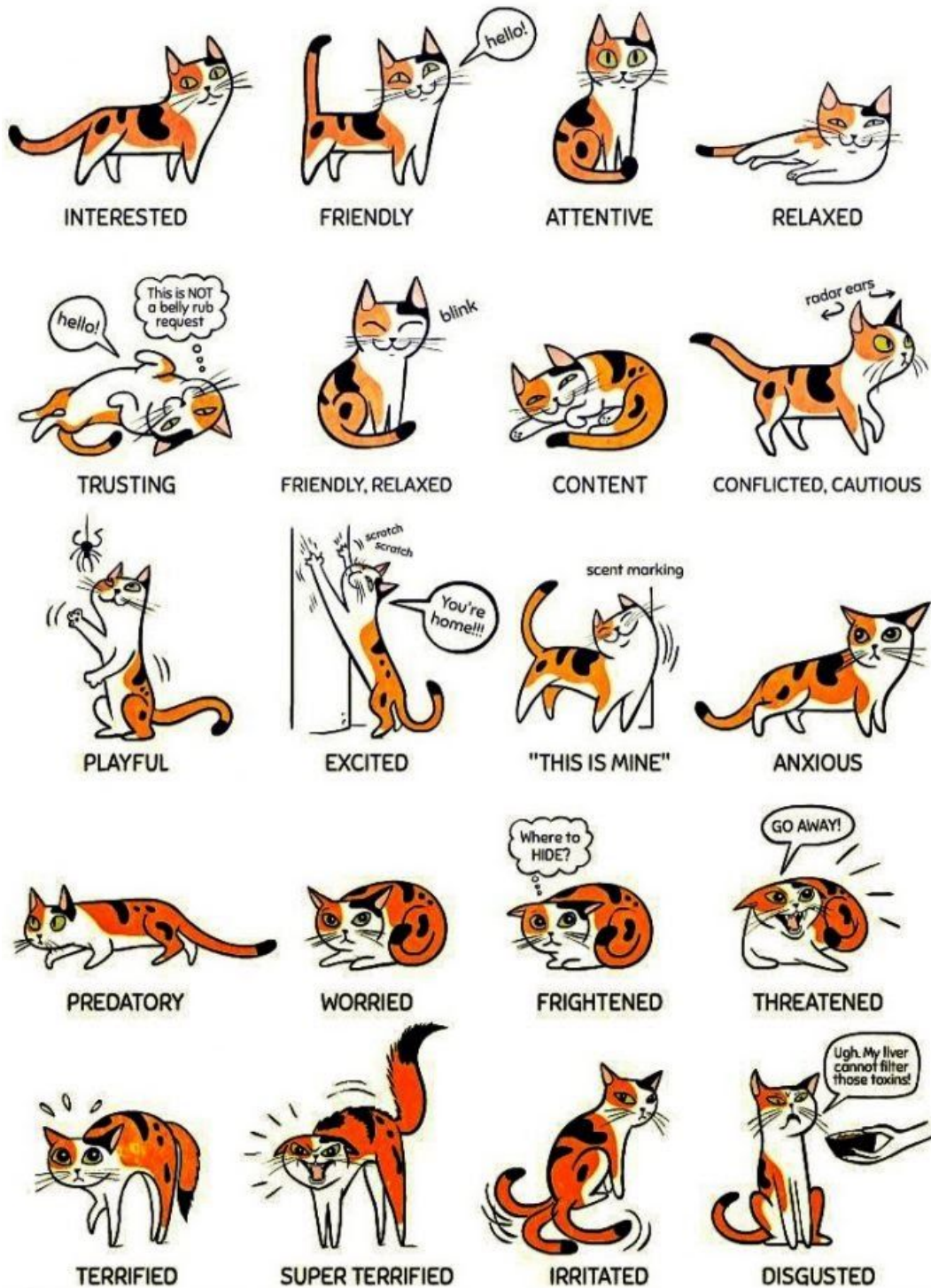
If you already have an animal in the house, wait a few days before making the introductions to leave them time to smell each other through the doors first. You can swap their bedding and other items, this will allow them to discover each other indirectly and then to better accept their new housemate. During the first meeting between two cats, it is normal for them to hiss and hit a little. Do not intervene (except in case of a serious fight), it could destabilise their emerging relationship.



If you have kids, teach them to handle the cat gently, to **never** catch by the tail, not to cut their whiskers. Even if the child wants to play, he should never wake up the cat if the animal is sleeping. Also, it's important to instruct your child not to feed the cat anything else but appropriate cat food and only under your supervision, a lot of human foods are extremely dangerous for felines (see *Nutrition* section)

2. Understanding your cat's body language

Cats use a variety of ways to communicate their feelings, needs and desires. Have a look at this short visual guide to gain some insight into your cat's psychology:



3. Nutrition



Put your cat's bowls with food and filtered water in a quiet part of the house and not too close to the litter box. Some cats don't like drinking from a bowl, especially when it's placed just beside their food. Try different places and containers, your cat will show you eventually where he wants to have his water. Just ensure there is plenty of it available for him at all times.

Dry kibbles and water should be available at will. Remember that a cat is not a dog, he eats 15 to 20 times a day.

If your cat tends to overeat at first, a timed food dispenser could be a good solution.

Ideally opt for the vet recommended brands of food, such as **Hills** and **Royal Canin**, they are more expensive but also more nutritious and will protect the health of your companion. Do not forget the wet food (paté or jelly), to be given at least once a day, and sometimes human food, such as cooked vegetables: cooked carrots, green peas, broccoli, squash. Please ensure these foods are not raw or seasoned: salt, sugar, pepper, vinegar and various other condiments are harmful to your cat's health.

Never give a cat starchy foods, also please consult the list of toxic foods below and **never** under any circumstances feed them to your cat, **regardless** of his eagerness to eat them.

If you change the brand or type of kibble, you must do it in stages, gradually reducing the old kibbles and adding the new ones, for example 75% - 25% (day 1-2), 50% - 50% (day 3-4), 25% - 75% (day 5-6) and 100% new kibbles from day 7.

So the main part of your cat's diet will be the dry food available to him all day, and wet food once or twice a day.

Forbidden foods that are toxic to cats, even cooked:



ONIONS & SHALLOTS



GARLIC



CACAO (CHOCOLATE)



DAIRY



POTATOES



CITRUS



LEEK



AVOCADO



GREEN TOMATO



ALMONDS



APPLE SEEDS



BROAD BEANS



RHUBARB



CHILLIS

4. Sleeping



Your cat will choose his favourite bedding himself and will certainly have several places where he will enjoy sleeping. If you don't want him to access your bedroom at night, you will have to leave him out of it from the very beginning and remain consistent about your rule.

Cats sleep for about 16 hours a day. It's important to be respectful of your cat's resting time, as his brain regenerates during these hours which is crucial to their well-being and health, especially for kittens.

5. Hygiene



- Litter :

You can choose a regular litter box or a covered one, some cats however won't like using the covered litter box and will go elsewhere. You have to place the box in a quiet spot

where your cat won't feel watched. Also, avoid placing it near a vacuum cleaner or a washing machine, as your cat might be scared to approach it.

Litter is cleaned every day by removing the dirty parts and has to be changed entirely every 4 to 7 days, depending on the type of litter and the number of animals using it. Putting some soda bicarbonate underneath helps eliminate the smell.

While choosing the type of litter for your cat, opt if possible for an environmentally safe one: clay or plant based. Some cats have difficulties breathing in a box with sand/chalk based litter, so discreetly observe your cat's reaction to the litter you choose.

After testing many brands of litter, we would recommend **CAT'S BEST ÖkoPlus** litter, due to its strong odor neutralisation and absorption capacity. It needs less changing, which minimises the expense and the time spent cleaning and refilling the toilet box. Also, this litter can be emptied and flushed directly into the toilet.

- **Hair :**

Brush your cat regularly, starting from a young age. It will help your cat bond with you and avoid having too much hair on carpets and furniture.

- **Claws :**

In order to prevent your cat from scratching furniture, place scratching posts or cat trees at the entrance of each room, where your cat is likely to mark his territory. If your cat picks a spot that he always tries to scratch (armrest of your couch for example), place a scratching post just in front of it. Using pheromones by spraying them where you would like your cat to scratch can help them get attracted to the spot you've chosen for them.

- **Toxoplasmosis and pregnancy :**

Toxoplasmosis is a generally benign infectious disease (similar to a flu), transmitted by certain animals. It can be dangerous for the fetus of unimmunised pregnant women (who have never had it before pregnancy) between 10 and 20 weeks of gestation.

It is absolutely not necessary to separate yourself from your cat during pregnancy in case you are not immune, you will just have to prevent your cat from going outside so that he doesn't contract the parasite, feed your cat only dry kibble and clean his litter using gloves (or delegate the task to someone else) and wash your hands regularly.

If you are still anxious, consider having your cat looked after by relatives during the first 20 weeks of pregnancy.

6. Play time and education



- **Play time :**

Cats are generally relatively independent, but it really depends on their individual character. Your cat will still need plenty of your attention and at least 45 minutes of play and cuddles with you per day. When you are away, remember to leave him safe toys to entertain himself.

- **Name learning :**

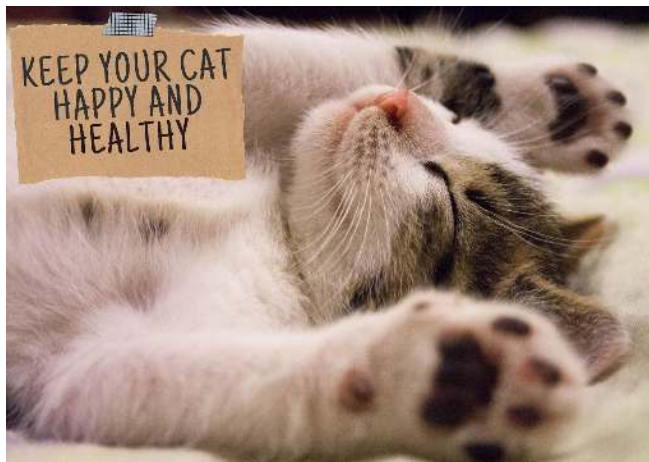
Repeat your cat's name several times when you are petting or feeding him, he will associate his name with moments of pleasure and will come to you as soon as you call him, expecting a reward.

- **Teaching your cat the limits :**

It's up to you to set the rules right from the start (such as not biting hands or putting claws while playing, etc.) and stick to them without exception. However be reasonable and keep in mind your cat's free-spirited nature while defining the restrictions. To make yourself understood by your cat, use your strict but calm intonation to say "no". If you have the same reaction to bad behaviours, he will understand you. If that doesn't help to stop his mischievous actions, use a water spray.

It is important **not** to make your cat scared of you. Your goal is to train while keeping your cat's trust, not to suscite fear which would be completely counterproductive.

7. Health



- **Vaccination :**

All cats should receive their core vaccinations and any others that are agreed between you and your vet, even if they will stay indoors as there is always a risk that we bring a dangerous virus on our hands, shoes or clothes. Also, if your cat will have to be kept in a cattery during your absence or with someone who has other cats, vaccination will be required.

The initial vaccine course is generally started at 8-9 weeks of age (or as soon as your cat is settled in your home, if you adopted an adult), with a second injection 3-4 weeks later. A first booster vaccination should be given after 12 months and repeated every year.

- **Worms and fleas treatment :**

A kitten must be treated against worms every month until the age of 6 months to avoid intestinal disorders, then twice a year if your cat doesn't go out, and if he does - every 4 months. Consult your vet about the preventive flea treatment, as its necessity depends on your location and other risk factors.

- **Spaying and neutering :**

If your cat hasn't been fixed already before arriving into your home, please do so as soon as he is settled and trusts you. Cats are usually spayed or neutered from 6 months of age,

your vet will advise you on the best time for it, depending on your cat's development. Neutered cats have longer lifespans as it has significant benefits for their safety (wondering, fighting less) and for their health (reduces the chances of prostate cancer, feline STDs and infections transmitted while fighting with other cats, removes the chances of testicular cancer).

It is also crucial in order to stop feline overpopulation: in one year an intact male may father many litters with an average of four or five kittens each. All these animals, if they manage to survive, will need homes that are already extremely difficult to find.

- **Signs that your cat might have health issues :**

At the slightest concern, call your vet who will listen and tell you by phone free of charge whether to come for a consultation or not.

Be alert if your cat loses appetite, hides, loses energy, sleeps more than usual, becomes aggressive, defecates outside of the litter box, doesn't go to the toilet at all or has diarrhea, has runny eyes, sneezing, or scratching excessively.

8. Safety



- **Windows :**

Secure your windows (especially tilting ones, where your cat can get stuck) and balconies using grilles or nets that you can purchase in pet stores or online (ex: zooplus.ie). Do not

take this warning lightly: open windows are a real danger to your cat who can easily lose balance while distracted by a bird or a fly and fall.

- **Wardrobes :**

Be careful not to close your cat inside a wardrobe or a cupboard, they like hiding in tight and hidden spots and can be very quick getting inside without you noticing.

- **Cords :**

Look out for cords and strings (like the ones attached to garbage bags) and don't let them in places accessible to the cat, as he can easily choke on one while playing.

- **Dangerous products and plants :**

Most cleaning products are highly toxic to cats, store them out of your cat's reach and be careful not to let him walk on a surface sprayed with chemicals as he will ingest them by licking his paws.

Some flowers and plants can be very dangerous as well. Here is a list of some of them, but we would advise researching the toxicity of each plant you have and before purchasing a new one.



Aloe Vera



Split-leaf
Philodendron



Lilies



Arum



Yucca



Holly



Mistletoe



Dieffenbachia
(dumb cane)

- **In the car :**

Your cat needs to travel in his transport carrier, securely closed to avoid jumping on the driver, disturbing the driver by crawling under their feet or escaping by the window.

We advise to keep your cat's carrier open and accessible, with a comfy blanket inside, when your cat is at home, so that he gets used to it and doesn't associate the carrier with unpleasant trips to the vet.

Avoid feeding your cat just before the trip as he may get nauseous in the car.

- **Going outside :**

If you are certain that your area is totally safe and decide to let your cat out, please neuter your cat and keep him updated on vaccines.

In order to make it easier for him to know where he lives and how to get back there, please don't let him outside during the first 2 months spent in your home and at least until 6 months of age.

- **Microchipping :**

Microchipping cats is not yet compulsory in Ireland but it is highly recommended, as it will allow you to reunite with your cat if he is lost. Also, if you will need to move abroad with your cat, you will be required to get him microchipped before the trip.

It is a simple procedure and is usually done at the same time as neutering or spaying. Once the chip is implanted, the unique identification number has to be added to the Certified Registry through a registry provider such as Fido.ie Ask your vet about the registration process to ensure you do it correctly.

- **If you are going on a holiday :**

Cats are territorial animals, very attached to their place, it is therefore preferable to have your cat looked after at home and to move him as little as possible to avoid stressing him out. Websites such as ie.catinaflat.com and pawshake.ie can help you find a local catsitter, who will look after your little friend in your own home.

- **If you move to a new place :**

While packing, keep your cat in a small quiet room (bathroom) and don't let him go out, as he might sense that something unusual is going on and hide outside for several days.

In the new home, follow the same steps as for the first time he arrived in your home: gradual opening of the doors, cuddles, pheromone diffuser if necessary. Don't forget to report your new address to the Registry, if your cat is microchipped.

9. Why you might consider adopting a second cat



If you don't already have animals in your house, please consider adopting another little friend for your cat, especially if he is young.

Two cats provide each other with exercise, social interaction and other forms of mental stimulation. Cats housed together have more opportunity to "be cats" by socialising and playing with each other, and this means they are less likely to be destructive or engage in other problematic behavior. Another benefit of two cats is that they are sometimes cleaner than a cat living by himself, as they will groom each other's ears and coat, often getting at places the cat can't reach on his own.

Of course, cats need to be well matched and introduced to each other gradually. Physical space that you have and the cost of having another animal also need to be taken into consideration.

We really hope this guide is helpful, please don't hesitate to reach out to the rescue or your vet, if you have any questions or concerns.

We wish you and your cat a very happy life together!