

## Bringing Your New Cat Home

At Tenth Life, we want to make sure that every kitty finds a happy home, and that every family is happy with their new cat. Therefore, we've put together this simple packet of tips for you to help make the transition as smooth as possible. Please don't hesitate to contact us at 314-808-2454 or [info@tenthlifecats.org](mailto:info@tenthlifecats.org) if you have *any* questions or problems with the adoption process.



### Tenth Life Cat Rescue

P.O. Box 63187  
St. Louis, MO 63163

314-808-2454

Website: [www.tenthlifecats.org](http://www.tenthlifecats.org)

General Questions: [info@tenthlifecats.org](mailto:info@tenthlifecats.org)

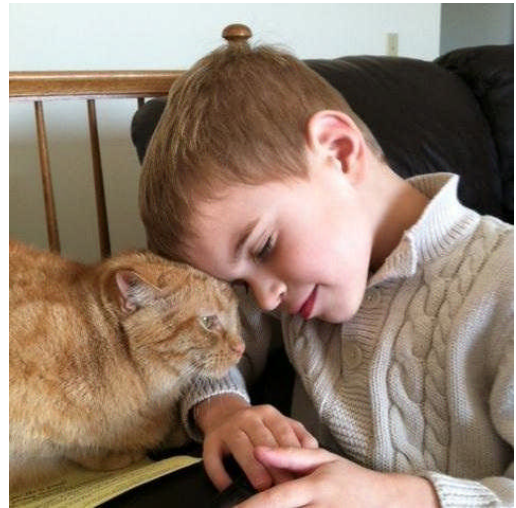
Adoption Specific Questions: [adoptions@tenthlifecats.org](mailto:adoptions@tenthlifecats.org)

Free Cat Behavior Advice: [behavior@tenthlifecats.org](mailto:behavior@tenthlifecats.org)

# My New Cat is Coming Home – What do I do?!

The first step is to prepare your house for your new friend.

1. Remove toxic plants (for a complete list, visit [tenthlifecats.org](http://tenthlifecats.org)).
2. Kitten-proof (secure blind cords, hide power cords, eliminate small objects – yarn, rubber bands, paper clips, etc.) and secure breakables.
3. Set up a single room as a home base for your new cat – cats are very territorial and large, brand-new territory is very overwhelming. A smaller space will help your new friend feel more comfortable more quickly.
  - a. A door that closes
  - b. Litter box
  - c. Food & water
  - d. Comfy blankets to rest on
4. Remind the family that a new kitty needs a *quiet* homecoming. Of course, you're excited! But to have a successful introduction to his new life, your cat will appreciate if you let him come to you; not the other way around.
  - a. Do not force affection
  - b. Have plenty of treats and toys on hand
  - c. Hold out your hand, palm down, and extend a finger. The kitty will take this as an invitation to sniff you and evaluate if you're a friend or foe. If the cat backs away, he needs more time. If he keeps his position, progress slowly by petting his cheeks and the top of his head. Slowly work towards the rest of the body, if he allows it.
5. ***At this point, if you have other cats, dogs, or kids to introduce your kitty to, read below for tips on making those transitions just as smooth as this one!***
6. After a few days in the kitty's home base, allow her to explore the rest of the house, with the other pets closed up in a room. Be sure to supervise so she doesn't hide.
7. Once the cat is comfortable, place the food, water, and litter box in their permanent spots. Be sure to show your cat where these items are!



Then the real fun begins – enjoy your new furry companion and watch as she learns all about her new, loving home.

## Play Therapy

While it's true that cats are typically easier to care for than dogs, felines do require (and benefit greatly from) your time and attention. With a few simple steps, you can ensure a happier life for your kitty.

- First and foremost, if you have a kitten, be sure he has another feline buddy to play with. Cats are the best playmates for each other and will be more likely to stay out of trouble if they have one another to wrestle and play with.
- Do not entice cats or kittens to play with your fingers, hands, or feet. This may be fun and cute when they are babies, but when they are adults with sharp teeth and strong jaws, it's not so fun!
- Try to use interactive toys: lasers, fishing-pole style toys, and things you can toss are all great options. The LAST thing you want is for your cat to associate your hands and feet with play time.
- Lasers and bubbles are fun, but can also be frustrating for a kitty because they never get to "capture" something. At the end of play time, make the laser "fly away" up the wall like a bug. Or, end your play session with a treat.
- To engage your kitty in true interactive play:
  - Cats like to hide from and stalk their prey. They will likely hide from, and watch, the toy for a long time before pouncing. Be patient.
  - Do not simply dangle the toy in front of your cat's face. And definitely don't hit him with it! You want to **challenge** the cat, simulate prey, and help him enjoy the hunt.
  - Try to move toys in a way that actual mice, birds, etc. would move.
  - Allow your cat to actually *catch* the prey now and again. If the toy always escapes her, she may become frustrated. Let her savor the moment before starting again.
  - Think of playtime as a workout – warm up slowly, have a period of intense exercise with the most vigorous workout, and then have a time of cool-down. If you get him riled up and then leave for dinner, he will be highly unsatisfied. For the cool-down, make the toy move slowly, as though it is injured, and let him catch it one last time.
  - **Reward the end of every play session with a treat or a meal.**
  - Please make playtime a daily occurrence. Cats are extremely routine oriented and will come to expect and greatly anticipate their play sessions. It's such a great way to bond with your cat. Aim for two 15-minute sessions a day.
  - Keep in mind that kittens may require more play time, but in shorter segments.
- In multi-cat households:
  - If your cats do not get along well, you may need to conduct separate play sessions.
  - You might need to have more than one toy in your hands.
  - Make sure every cat gets to capture the prey.
- Don't forget to use catnip! Try to limit its use to once a week, or it may lose effectiveness.



## Introducing Your New Cat to a Resident Cat(s)

It is an ill-fated misconception to assume you can put two cats together in a room and they will magically love each other instantly. This *rarely* happens. Below, we have some simple steps you can take to increase the chances of your cats becoming best buddies.

Please take the steps slowly! Before moving on to the next step, check the cats' body language. (Cats should be relaxed, with ears upright, tail calm, and fur lying flat. There should be minimal growling, hissing, or posturing with a raised back. All of these actions are normal, but should be a caution to us – proceed carefully!)

1. Set up your new cat's home base, as described above. For the first 72 hours, DO NOTHING – do not attempt to introduce the cats to each other!
  - a. Be sure to spend time with both the new cat and your resident cat – we don't want any jealousy sprouting!
  - b. These three days are important for your new cat to get used to all the new smells, sounds, and sights he is experiencing. Adding a cat introduction to all those foreign experiences is ***extremely stressful*** and detrimental to your new cat.
2. Leave a blanket or towel in the new cat's room and another in your resident cat's favorite spot. After they have spent time sleeping on these linens, swap them. This way, the cats can smell each other without the stress of a face-to-face introduction.
3. Create positive experiences while they are safely separated. This will teach them that the other cat is a friend.
  - a. Feed the cats on either side of a closed door
  - b. Use a feather toy to play with both cats under the door
  - c. Give lots of praise and treats on opposite sides of the closed door
4. After a week, swap the cats' spots – let your new cat explore while your resident cat checks out the new cat's home base, with the door closed. DO NOT LET THE CATS MEET DURING THIS SWAP! After a few hours, switch them back. Try this step several times.
5. After about two weeks, it's time to meet!
  - a. Clip everyone's claws.
  - b. Place a treat or yummy food (deli meat works great!) right outside the home base and another serving several feet away, but within sight of the home base dish.
  - c. Entice your resident cat to partake in the food while the new cat eats his. Allowing the cats to see each other while they eat will again create positive associations.
  - d. After the treat is done, put the new cat back in his home base.
  - e. Try again the next day, placing the plates a bit closer together. Repeat until they are close enough to be face to face.
  - f. Allow the meeting to unfold naturally. Do not interfere! It is very normal for them to hiss, posture, growl, and swat each other.
    - i. In the unlikely event that they actually FIGHT, do NOT pick up any of the cats. Use a towel or a piece of cardboard to block their sight of each other, and then use that obstruction to guide one cat into a safe place. More time will need to be devoted to positive associations.
  - g. After the cats have spent several harmonious hours together with your supervision, several times in a row, they will be ok left alone.
6. Be patient! Harmonious cat relations take time. And remember to call us at any time!

# Introducing Your New Cat to a Dog

The most important thing to consider in a dog-cat relationship is if the dog is friendly to cats. Being bigger animals, dogs can do much greater damage to a cat than the other way around. So, if you have even the tiniest sliver of doubt that your dog is cat-friendly, **DO NOT RISK IT**. We have seen far too many seriously injured cats who have had an unfortunate encounter with an aggressive dog. They are lucky to survive.

Follow these steps for a successful introduction:

1. Get to know both your cat and dog very well – know their body language and moods.
2. Be sure the dog is well trained to sit, stay, come, and respond to “NO!”
3. Have a friend on hand to help if things get iffy.
4. Before introducing, take your dog for a nice walk, get him some exercise, and feed him a meal.
5. Put the dog on a short leash or in his crate. The cat can be in a carrier if he is shy; otherwise let him walk around.
6. Let the two animals see each other at a distance. Pet and talk to the dog soothingly. If he barks, abort the introduction. Otherwise, give lots of treats and praise to both animals. If the dog lunges or shows any signs of aggression or excitability, stop the introduction.
7. Repeat the short visits several times a day, gradually giving the dog more leash as appropriate and letting the cat approach.
8. Repeat the above steps daily until you’ve had several consecutive days of incident-free visits.
9. Once you’re comfortable, take the dog off his leash and monitor very closely. If problems arise and the dog doesn’t respond to simple vocal commands, back up to the previous phase for a few days. Gradually make the no-leash sessions longer.
10. **Do not leave them alone together until you’re POSITIVE they are both fully comfortable with each other.**
11. During the unleashed visits, always be sure that the cat has an escape route or place to jump to safety.
12. Keep in mind that some animals are just not compatible. You can always contact Tenth Life for questions or guidance!



## **Babies, Kids, and Cats!**

Contrary to what some believe, cats and babies CAN get along! How to make a successful relationship? Keep reading.

1. If you're able, start preparing your kitty for a baby *before* the baby arrives. Start using the lotions and creams you plan to use for the baby. If possible, invite friends' babies over or get a recording of a baby crying. If you plan to shut the door to the baby's room when he arrives, close the door NOW to reduce the chance of the cat resenting the actual child.
2. Cats pick up on our emotions. If you are tense when the cat and baby are together, the cat will suspect that the baby is something to fear. Instead, give lots of treats and praise; let the cat know you still love her!
3. If you're holding the baby, have a laser pointer or stick toy at hand. If possible have treats. Playing with the kitty or giving him treats will create positive associations with the bundle in your hands. DO NOT shoo the cat away from the baby.
4. If the cat approaches the baby, be calm, encouraging, and give lots of praise. In the unlikely situation that the cat swats your baby, do not worry – cats rarely use their claws. To them, the baby is similar to another cat and they feel the need to establish dominance. Closely monitor, but do not yell or punish.
5. Make as many positive experiences as you can between the cat and the baby!

### **Older Children**

Please teach older kids to be gentle with cats. Show them how to play with cats appropriately; using wand/stick toys or tossing mice or balls for the cat is a *wonderful* way for kids to interact and bond with cats. Teach kids that cats prefer to approach humans; not the other way around.

If, by chance, a cat scratches or bites your child, the cat is letting the child know that she wants to be left alone. To decrease chances of injury, keep your kitty's claws clipped.

Cats are such a wonderful addition to any family, no matter the makeup of the family. Simple steps like the above can be taken to make everyone's transition as smooth and harmonious as possible.

**Congratulations again on your new furry family member!**

