



Introducing Cat to a New Territory

Importance of Confinement

The setting at the shelter, the car ride home, and meeting new people can add to your new cat's stress levels. When introducing your cat into a new home, they'll need time to adjust. Make the adjustment period shorter by allowing the cat to become accustomed to their new home slowly through confinement. Only once they are comfortable in their space can they feel comfortable eating, drinking, resting, and eliminating.



Confinement is especially crucial for shy or fearful cats as they may be overwhelmed when moving into a new home. Given free run of the house, a scared cat will often bolt around, looking for a safe place to hide. Cats can injure themselves running into furniture or walls in a panic. They may also hide somewhere unsafe, such as under the stove or inside a reclining chair and stay hidden for several days.

A safe room will allow your new cat a small space where they'll feel secure. The less worried they are, the more social they can become. Kittens especially benefit from an initial confinement to a small room or even to a large crate. This will provide time to kitten-proof the rest of the house. When left alone, a smaller kitten should be confined for three reasons:

1. It reinforces good litter box habits.
2. It prevents accidents where the kitten might injure themselves.
3. It means no more searching for kittens hiding from view.

When bringing a new cat into your home with resident cats, put the new cat in their special room for a few days, even a few weeks. This allows the resident cat(s) and the new cat to get to know each other via scent without seeing each other face to face.

You'll know the new cat is ready to explore more of the house when:

- They are performing their natural functions: eating, resting, grooming, using the litter box, etc.
- They are responsive to petting and playing.
- They are comfortable with normal activities in the room and are not afraid.

Tony La Russa's Animal Rescue Foundation

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- They are showing interest in leaving the room

When possible, allow the new cat to expand their territory slowly, ideally one room at a time. If at any time the cat seems overwhelmed, return them to their safe room and try again later.

Don't feel bad about confining your new cat. It will help them relax and adjust to their new surroundings much quicker.

Setting Up the Space

Your new cat's safe space should be a small, quiet room such as a bathroom, small office, or large walk-in closet. Make sure the room does not have any hiding spots that might endanger them. A box tipped on its side with a towel often provides a good hiding spot for the cat to feel safe. A few days or even a few weeks will give your cat time to acclimate to the familiar sounds and smells in your home, before exploring other areas.