

Garston Animal Rescue

New Cat or Kitten

There is a wealth of information online, which will tell you everything you need to know about cats and how to care for them. We recommend that you spend some time reading this information, even if you have owned a cat before. The more we understand animals the better we can care for them. If you have children then we strongly advise you teach them about caring for their cat before you adopt.

Visit the RSPCA website and the Cat's Protection League for further information.

Be Prepared

Set up a base in a room where the door can be closed and the cat can be kept securely inside until you begin to introduce it to the rest of the house. Even the most confident of cats or kittens will be stressed by a move to new surroundings and therefore introducing them to the house gradually reduces the amount of stress they feel and enables them to settle in quicker. The windows in the room should be kept closed, as the cat will need to stay in for a designated period of time.

Ensure the room is equipped with litter tray, water, food, a bed, scratching post and toys.

When the cat first comes to your home, consider having your TV and radio at a far lower volume than usual and avoid visitors for the first few days.

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Settling in

You may find they are nervous at first. Let them come out of their cat carrier in their own time. Make sure you have a quiet place where they can snuggle up and feel safe. If they are kittens, remember they are babies. They need to sleep. Once they trust you they will play and cuddle with you. It is possible that they will go into hiding for a period of time, only peering at you from what they judge to be a safe distance and from a place where they feel reasonably secure. Give them time and space and they will come to trust you and love you.

Talk to the cat, in a quiet reassuring voice, so he/she gets to know your voice as quickly as possible. Blink at him/her in an exaggerated manner. (Staring at a cat makes the cat feel threatened).

If you have children make sure they know all the rules on how to keep the cat safe and ensure they know how to handle the cat and most importantly when to leave the cat alone.



If you have visitors over the first few weeks, ensure that they know not to approach the cat/s or stare at them. In the wild, staring is an act of confrontation, often followed by an attack so they would be understandably intimidated by someone's well-meant interest in them.

Introduce your cat gradually to the rest of the house. Allow her to explore one room at a time so she can build her confidence.

Remember to check all windows and Outside doors are closed.

Your cat or kitten is liable to panic when taken out of familiar surroundings. The way to deal with this is to calmly coax them back into their familiar room and to quietly shut all outside doors so they cannot run anywhere unsafe in their panic.

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Safety

Always double-check your washing machine, tumble-drier and cooker before you switch them on, to make sure your cat has not jumped in. Keep the seat down on the toilet as cats are often fascinated by water and a kitten could easily fall in. Make sure you have a fire guard as kittens do not realise a fire is hot.

Going out

When adopting a new cat or kitten you must be prepared to keep them in for a designated period of time.

You must ensure windows and external doors are kept shut. Cats will not hesitate to jump from an upstairs window. We have known cats to jump from 3 storey high buildings.

We recommend the following

Kittens should be kept safely indoors until they are neutered, at least 6 months old and introduced to the outdoors during the spring.

- Kittens should be kept in at least until they are neutered. Kittens should be neutered from 4 months of age, subject to veterinary advice. They can be neutered after this age but there is always the risk that they will get pregnant. Never let your cat have a litter of kittens as thousands of **healthy** cats are being destroyed **daily** in the UK. It is a myth that kittens of the same litter will not mate - they will if they come into season.
- Even if your kittens are neutered at 4 months we strongly advise that they are kept in until they are at least 6 months. Kittens are babies and have little or no sense of danger. A young kitten is likely to get in to all sorts of danger if they are let outside too young.

Adult cats who are friendly and confident should be kept indoors for a minimum of 6 weeks.

- The reason for this is that it gives the new cat a chance to assess you, to trust you and, very importantly, to get to know the sound of your voice. So should the unthinkable happen, and they did disappear by mistake at first, then the more they know your voice and the more they know you enough to trust you, the greater the chance of getting them back.

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For more information on Lost Cats please see our advice leaflet. If you lose a cat you have adopted from us please contact us immediately and we will do our best to help.

Timid Cats should be kept indoors for a minimum of 4 months. Please see our advice sheet on Caring for Timid Cats.

Introducing your cat to the outdoors

If after the designated time period your cat is very relaxed, happy and confident with you, you can start to let her out, but only while you're going to be outside with her yourself for a long time. She must only be allowed out under close supervision, and at a time when you know you have no immediate commitments. When you come in, bring her in too. The ideal time to allow her out is when you've plenty of time and plan on being outside for a good while. Note: if she starts to panic then do not let her out just yet as she could easily run away out of sheer fright.

Cat flaps are generally a good idea, but they must be fully able to use it, both to come in and to go out - before they are left out alone, otherwise they could simply panic and disappear. We suggest that you witness your cat using the cat flap a number of times before you leave them to access it on their own.

Consider having a very small dog kennel in your back garden/yard as a safety precaution should they get shut out in the rain. This will give them shelter and make them feel safe.

Trips to the vet

We recommend that the cat carrier is kept out in the room for a few days prior to the vet appointment to get her used to it. Always double-check that the carrier is completely secure when closed, and never feel tempted to open it up on the way to the vet or in the vet's waiting room. Cats when frightened have a swift personality change and will panic beyond recognition. Always use a proper cat carrier and not a cardboard carrier. Cardboard carriers are useless should it rain or the cat wets in it out of nervousness resulting in collapsed box.

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Health

It is a good idea to get your pet registered now with your local vet so that you can access veterinary advice when you need it. We use Alder Veterinary Hospital because they have many facilities, including their own hospital. Their telephone numbers are 0151 220 4668 (Eaton Road, West Derby) and 0151 291 9393 (Brodie Avenue, Liverpool 19).

Holidays

We recommend that people seek out a pet sitter or get a trusted cat-loving neighbour to pop in. Most cats are distressed at being put in a strange cattery. They do not know you are coming back for them – and for a nervous cat it is obviously far worse. We do not recommend cats going to stay with friends/relatives during your absence because if they escape then they are in a strange place and will become lost in an unfamiliar area. Many of the telephone calls we get about lost cats are about those lost in precisely these circumstances, and we are horrified at the thought of a cat lost and badly frightened in an area that she does not even know. The other advantage of a trusted friend or neighbour popping in is your home will be more secure.

Finally

With the right care, love and attention your cat will undoubtedly settle into their new home successfully. However, if you are concerned that your cat is not making progress then please contact us for further advice and support

We operate a safety net procedure here in that should for any reason during an animal's lifetime an adopter finds they are no longer able to keep the animal **they have adopted from us** we will have the animal back without question. The reasoning behind this is not to encourage people to take adoption lightly but simply to ensure the future safety of the animal.

Keep your adoption documents safe.

We always love to hear from our adopters so please keep in touch.