

BRINGING HOME A FEARFUL CAT

Need More Help?

Find additional resources at
pasadenahumane.org/behavior.

Before letting the cat out of the carrier:

- Set up a small sanctuary room or area in your home. This can be a small room or large bathroom with a door that closes, or you can use a large 42-inch wire dog crate. Provide a covered cat den with the blanket that your cat came with from the shelter. You can even use a plastic cat carrier with the door open as a den.
- Block any crawlspace (under beds, behind heavy furniture) that is difficult for you to access. Close windows. Cats can squeeze into tiny areas.
- Set up uncovered litter boxes in an easily accessible, quiet area. Food and water bowls should be as far away from the litter box as possible.

The First Three Days:

- Let the cat decompress for at least three days. **Limit interactions to 15-20 minutes several times a day** unless the cat solicits attention from you first (meowing or approaching you). Feed meals at the same time daily. Slowly introduce wand toys from a distance. **Refrain from reaching out to touch the cat during this time.**
- Start a routine that revolves around feeding times. At the shelter, cats eat wet food in the morning, with kibble provided throughout the day and in the evening.
- As the cat gets used to their surroundings and the noises and smells of your daily routine, refrain from having guests over or doing anything “out of the ordinary” like running the vacuum, using fragrant sprays and cleaning products or moving litter boxes.
- It’s normal for cats to feel extra stress for a few days. Any hissing, grumbling or yowling is a sign that they are too nervous and uncomfortable with what is going on in the environment.
- To soothe stress, you can play soft music and dim the lighting. Provide a safe and quiet space for the cat to scratch on a horizontal or vertical scratching pad, provide catnip and leave small toys.

Next Three Weeks:

- **After about four days**, lengthen the amount of time you visit. Increase the duration of play sessions.
- **Handling cats & kittens:** Present your closed fist about 2 feet away from the cat. Let them come to you. If the cat retreats or does not approach, give them more space and time. Use a thick blanket or towel if you must pick up the cat in an emergency. Wrap your cat up very tightly.
- Once the cat shows more confidence, you can begin to pair touch with tasty treats or even daily canned food meals. Let the cat approach you first. If the cat sniffs, leans in, or seems relaxed next to you (less than 10 inches away), you can try petting the cheek, neck or top of head one or more times, then leave a treat on the floor. If the cat walks away, do not attempt touching again. If luring with food, let them eat the food without trying to reach out to touch. Then see if the cat approaches you to touch them. Leave some treats at the end of the petting session.
- After two or three weeks, you can release the cat from the crate or small room into the other areas of the home for short amounts of time. Gradually increase access if appropriate.

We are always here to help! You can find additional behavior and training resources at pasadenahumane.org/behavior.



PASADENA HUMANE

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