

CAT ADJUSTMENT TIMELINE

Bringing home a new cat is an exciting milestone, but patience and understanding during the adjustment period are the keys to building a lasting bond. Laying the groundwork for a successful transition comes from the earliest experience of introducing your cat to their new home. Cats are extremely territorial animals and will find stability, comfort and confidence through their relationship with their environment.

Cats use their sensitive sense of smell to establish their territory and identify safe spaces. They do this through the use of **"scent marking"** with glands on their head, cheeks, paws, body and tail. This behavior leaves their scent behind and creates a sense of familiarity and establishes their territory. **"Mapping"** involves the discovery and marking of hiding spots, elevated surfaces and any additional cat resources.

FIRST DAYS TO REST



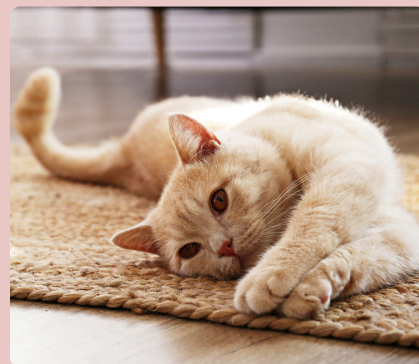
Start your cat in a quiet sanctuary room for the first few days to decompress and adjust to their new surroundings. Include food, water, a litter box, scratching post, toys and places to hide and climb. A Feliway diffuser can help create a calm, familiar environment during the transition.

FIRST WEEKS TO EXPLORE



Allow your cat to gradually explore the rest of the home at their own pace, returning to the sanctuary room when desired. This phase allows your cat to mark the environment with their scent glands and **"map"** out the home. Mapping involves the discovery of hiding spots & elevated surfaces.

FIRST MONTHS TO BELONG



Give your cat the time and space they need to build trust, comfort and confidence. Many cats hide for days, weeks or even months while adjusting, and that's completely normal. Consistent routines, scent marking and a stable environment will help them feel safe, secure and thrive.

TIMID OR FEARFUL CATS

Cats may be timid for a variety of reasons, including lack of socialization, environmental changes or new family members. To ease their anxiety, first identify the source and then work to establish a secure environment. Providing **hiding spots and cat tunnels** will offer **"safe"** pathways and encourage exploration. **Vertical spaces** can provide a reassuring visibility advantage, especially in homes with dogs or small children.

Interactive play sessions are invaluable by building confidence and strengthening your bond. Always monitor a cat's **body language** for stress cues, and allow fearful cats to control their interactions and navigate surroundings at their own pace. Choice = Trust.

Cardboard boxes are an inexpensive way to provide your cat with safe hiding spots.

SANCTUARY ROOM

First days to rest. First weeks to explore. First months to belong. Creating a "sanctuary room" allows your cat to gradually adjust to their new home without feeling overwhelmed. This can be a small room or bathroom, set up with all necessary resources. This room will give your cat the gift of time to adjust to the new sights, smells and sounds of their home, allowing them to decompress and settle in at their own pace.



EXPLORING

Once your cat has shown confidence in their sanctuary room, **gradually** allow access to other areas of your home. Cats learn their environment through exploration and scent-marking. Rubbing on furniture, scratching posts and investigating new spaces helps them build confidence and feel secure.

Living with other pets? Please review [Building Bonds](#) for step-by-step guidance on introducing your new cat to resident pets.

CAT BODY LANGUAGE

EARS **Forward/neutral ears** suggest a relaxed and confident cat. **Flattened ears** often indicate fear or anger. **Sideways-facing "airplane ears"** typically signal agitation, discomfort, pain or overstimulation.

BODY SHAPE A **relaxed cat** will often have a loose, comfortable posture and may even roll onto their side or expose their belly as a sign of trust. When a **cat feels fearful**, they may appear smaller by crouching low or tucking their body inward. A **frightened or defensive cat** may also try to appear larger by arching their back, puffing up their fur and turning sideways toward a perceived threat.

EYES **Slow blinks** are often a sign that your cat feels safe and comfortable. **Large, dilated pupils** indicate stimulation and heightened emotions. This may mean the cat is feeling playful and excited or it can signal fear, stress or frustration.

TAIL SHAPE A **high, upright tail or curved tip** is often a sign of a happy, confident and friendly cat. A **low or tucked tail** may indicate fear, anxiety or uncertainty. A **puffed-up tail** is a defensive response meant to make a cat appear larger when feeling threatened. **Tail quivers** can signal excitement and happiness, while **rapid flicking** or thumping may indicate irritation, overstimulation or precede a hunting sequence.