

## How to Care for your New Cat

Cats may seem like some of the most independent pets, but they still count on you to provide them with food, water, safe shelter, veterinary care, a clean litter box, love, and more. Take care of these essentials, and you'll develop a rewarding, loyal and loving relationship with your feline companion.

1. Keep your cat safe by keeping him/her indoors, safely confined to your property, or walked on a harness and leash. Doing so is best for you, your cat, and your community. Here are other ways to keep your cat safe and secure:
  - Always use a cat carrier when transporting your cat.
  - Make certain that all windows are securely screened.
  - Keep the washer and dryer closed, and check inside before each use. (Some cats like to climb in these appliances if they're left open.)
  - Get into the habit of ensuring that drawers, closets, and cupboards are uninhabited before you close them—a kitty may be lurking inside.
2. Outfit your cat with a breakaway collar and visible ID that includes your name, address, and telephone number. No matter how careful you are, there's always a chance he/she may slip out the door. Your cat is more likely to get home safely if he/she has a collar and ID. Also, be a good citizen by complying with any local cat laws.
3. Take your cat to the veterinarian for regular check-ups and vaccinations. If you don't have a veterinarian, ask your local animal shelter, rescue group, or a pet-owning friend for a referral. Medical care is as essential for your cat as it is for you. If you already have dogs or cats at home, make sure they are up-to-date on their shots and in good general health before you introduce your new cat.
4. Spay or neuter your cat. Neutering and spaying your cat will keep him/her healthier and help decrease the number of cats euthanized every year because of cat overpopulation. If you can't afford the operation, look into low-cost options.
5. Feed your cat a nutritionally balanced diet and provide fresh water 24/7. Give your cat the highest quality food you can afford. Good nutrition is the key to good health. Cats generally prefer a mix of dry food and canned food. The healthiest cat is on a high protein grain free diet. This may seem like an expensive route but it will be less vet costs in the end. A cat cannot digest grain and that is primarily what most kibble cats foods are made from. This bad diet has been proven to led to urinary tract issues and acute kidney failure in most cats as they age and has been found in cats as early as 1 year old. It is recommended that you feed a wet grain free diet supplemented by a grain free kibble. If you feel you cannot afford this diet just remember that any cheap wet is better than dry... **always**. Please visit the staff at Pet Valu for some food recommendations.
6. Keep the litter box clean. Cats are naturally clean, and most will instinctively use a clean litter box; you just have to show them where it is. Don't place your cat in the box and make little scratching motions with his/her front paws. This will probably upset your cat and may make him/her leery of the box. Scoop the box at least once daily and periodically wash it with dish liquid and hot water. Because cats also value privacy, place the litter box in a convenient but quiet spot. A clean litter box will attract a cat. But, a dirty one might repel them and make him/her look elsewhere to relieve themselves. If you have more than one cat, it is a good idea to have one more litter box than cat (placed in different areas of the house) in order to prevent any "turf" guarding of the box by one cat.
7. Groom your cat often. wAll cats, whether long- or short-haired, should be brushed regularly to keep their coats and skin healthy, prevent matting, and reduce shedding and hairballs. They also need to have their claws clipped to keep them from growing into their paws. Grooming is a good opportunity to discover any lumps, fleas, injuries, etc., and to bond with your kitty.

8. Make time to play and provide entertainment. Cats often entertain themselves, but regular play sessions with your pet will provide him/her with the physical and mental stimulation they need and strengthen the bond you share. Give them toys and scratching posts to distract them from your household goods. Cats love to play and will appreciate simple and inexpensive toys. Ping-Pong balls and opened paper bags (remove the handles) can provide hours of fun. A comfortable perch by a window can become your cat's very own entertainment and relaxation centre. Rotate toys to maintain your cat's interest in them. You might want to invest in a kitty condo or cat tree—a structure typically covered in carpet or sisal (a rough material cats love to scratch) where your cat can climb, stretch, and hide to their hearts content while watching the world go by. But the best two things you can give your cat are love and playtime.

9. Provide your cat with some basic training to help him/her get along in your home. It's true that cats usually have their own ideas about how to do things. Even so, a positive approach can teach most cats not to scratch the couch, eat plants, or jump up on the kitchen counter. With repeated, gentle, and consistent training, your cat will learn the house rules. Don't ever yell or hit your cat.