Ten Tips for Cat Adopters

Thank you so much for adopting from the Santa Fe Animal Shelter and providing a home for an animal in need! Follow these tips to start off right with your new companion.

1. Set up your home for a successful transition.
   - Cat-proof your home before letting your new cat out of their carrier.
   - Rehome poisonous houseplants like lilies, jade, and English ivy.
   - Put away any breakables and keep the toilet lid down.
   - Block off spaces under furniture or in closets where you don’t want your cat to hide.
   - Give your cat safe places to hide like boxes, cozy carriers, or beds high off the floor.

2. Prioritize your cat’s comfort.
   - “Catify” your home to make your cat more comfortable.
   - Provide vertical spaces, scratching posts, window perches, toys, and treats.
   - Keep your cat in one room (their basecamp) at first; make this a safe space for them.
   - When your cat is calm and eating regularly, gradually open up other rooms.

3. Expect an adjustment period for you and your cat.
   - Cats are very sensitive to environmental stressors and change.
   - They need weeks to months to settle into a new environment.
   - Keep things calm for your new cat. Avoid introducing them to new people right away.
   - Be patient and compassionate with yourself and your cat during this transition.

4. Learn to read cat body language.
   - Understanding goes both ways. It’s important to know what your cat is telling you.
   - Since cats can’t speak, they use their body to communicate.
   - Stress signals include dilated pupils, a tucked tail, arched back, and pinned ears.
   - If your cat is stressed, toss them a treat and give them space to help them settle down.
   - Check out videos on cat body language to get a better idea of what to look for.

5. Litter box placement and content are important.
   - Have at least two litter boxes set up for your new cat.
   - Place one in a quiet, low-traffic area and the other in a socially significant room.
   - The majority of adult cats prefer fine grain clumping litter.
   - Non-clumping litter is recommended for kittens under ten weeks of age.
   - Scoop litter boxes daily; clean litter boxes and replace litter weekly.
6. **Introduce your cat to other animals carefully.**
   - Cats are territorial, and should be kept in separate areas when they arrive home.
   - Swap scents with other animals by trading blankets or toys between areas.
   - Only when your cat is comfortable in their basecamp should you progress past this.
   - Always supervise any interactions between newly-introduced animals.
   - Not all animals like each other, and that’s okay!

7. **Provide enrichment for your cat.**
   - Enrichment is any activity that allows your cat to engage in natural cat behaviors.
   - A cat who receives daily enrichment will be a happier, more satisfied cat.
   - Boredom can lead to nuisance behaviors, so keep them occupied with enrichment!
   - Use wand toys or hidden treats to satisfy your cat’s desire to hunt with [prey play](#).
   - Set up a natural “Cat TV” by placing ledges near windows where they can look outside.
   - Give your cat [food puzzles](#) to exercise their problem-solving skills.

8. **Use positive-reinforcement training to teach your cat.**
   - Reward the behaviors you like from your cat and ignore the behaviors you don’t.
   - Avoid punishing unwanted behaviors, as this can cause behavior problems later on.
   - Respect your cat’s space and communication.
   - Set your cat up for success by ensuring new situations are positive experiences.
   - Use tasty treats to create a positive association with the situation.

9. **Cats can be trained to do tricks, too!**
   - You can teach your cat to high five, go to crate on cue, and even walk on a loose leash.
   - Use clicker training to teach behaviors you and your cat both love!
   - Try high-value treats like Lick’n’Lap, Temptations, or freeze-dried meats.
   - Training is a good way to get in mental enrichment and keep your cat feeling fulfilled.
   - Check out [Cat Behavior Solutions](#) and Jackson Galaxy’s website for more information.

10. **Don’t know the answer? Ask for help!**
    - The earlier you reach out for help, the better!
    - The internet is not a reliable source for training information.
    - Reach out to us here at the shelter or seek help from certified training experts.
    - Email our Training Team at training@sfrhumanesociety.org with any training questions.
    - Check out our selection of [Community Classes](#) for cat topics!

For more resources, check out [https://sfhumanesociety.org/behavior-library/](https://sfhumanesociety.org/behavior-library/)