

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@sfhumanesociety.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/>