



Issue: New Home Adjustment Period

Bringing a cat into a new environment can be somewhat stressful. Most cats will need slow introductions to new places, people and other animals. All cats including shy, independent and even outgoing, social cats need time to take everything in.

So, you've adopted your new cat. What's next?

It would be best if everything is already set up at home before the cat's arrival. You should have a room dedicated to be your new cat's "safe space," where they will spend their first few days. This room should have your new cat's litter box, food, water and bed. There should also be a place where your new cat can hide, but where you can still see them to check in. Vertical hiding spaces are ideal for cats, like a cat tree or a shelf. This allows the cat to get away and have a place to themselves and check out their surroundings while still being present in the room.

If your new cat is still on edge after a week or so, you can also try using a calming scent, like Feliway or lavender. You can also use lots of positive reinforcement to reward the cat whenever they're displaying behavior you want to see more of. For example, you can give the cat a treat when they come up to you or to other people in the home, if they come out of their "safe zone" to explore the house, or when they display calm or curious behavior around other animals.

When your cat begins to loosen up and becomes more relaxed, that's when you should start allowing the cat to explore the rest of the home. Set up additional litterboxes and beds to see where your cat prefers to eliminate and to lounge. You can also move some of the items from the "safe space" room around the house; having familiar items around the home that have the cat's scent can make them feel more welcome, safe and assured.

Following these steps can help your cat adjust more quickly and be more comfortable. In all, things should be taken slow. Depending on the cat, it could take days or weeks to get into the rhythm and adjust into its new environment. Have a safe zone, be prepared and take things at the cat's own pace.

Related flyers: *"Decompression Period"*, *"Helping a Fearful Cat"*

For more information:

International Association of Animal Behavior Consultants: m.iaabc.org

Certified Applied Animal Behaviorists: corecaab.org