



Friends
for
Animals
of Metro Detroit

CAT ADOPTION MANUAL

Updated 4/15/2023

Congratulations on adopting your new best friend!

Pets give us more than what's humanly possible. In return for a lifetime of unconditional love, loyalty and friendship, there are some important things you need to do to keep them safe and happy. Here are some tips to start you out on the path to success. Although a cat may or may not have exhibited any of the following behaviors detailed in this manual, be aware that change is difficult for animals. Often you will see behavior change as they become comfortable and confident in the home or the opposite, where it's overwhelming and they may display fearful behavior. The best bet is to go slow and steady, and work on training the second you arrive home. It is very helpful to have your household set up prior to bringing a new cat home, much like baby proofing a house prior to bringing home a child. We have also partnered with Maddie's Pet Assistant to help you settle into a good routine.

Socialization

- Food is your best tool. Cats are highly food motivated. Have several types of treats on hand, including whole meats.
- For every "no" you give them (no counter surfing), there must be a "yes" (you can sit on this shelf or chair facing a window). Use double sided tape on the area you do not want the cat to go, or an odor like citrus as a deterrent. Make the places you want the cat to go very desirable and inviting. Windows with a view, catnip or silvertvine, a plush blanket or padded bedding. Make sure to reward him/her for doing a good job!
- Every cat is an individual and learns/adjusts at his/her own speed, be patient. Shy or fractious cats can take months to adjust to their new life.
- Cats feed off of and mirror human emotion. Be calm and peaceful and watch your cat's confidence grow.
- Slow blinking back and forth with your cat builds trust and it is fun to watch them join in.
- Offer the cat something that smells like you and let him or her approach you when they are ready.
- Reach one finger out near the bridge of the cat's nose and let him/her sniff and head butt as he/she is ready.

Introductions to other Cats

- While all cats are individuals, most of the time cats benefit from having a buddy. Cats are naturally communal - look for a cat that suits the personality of the one you already have.

- Your newly adopted cat will need to be confined to his/her own room for at least a week. It can take much longer than that. Pay close attention to body language and that they are eating and drinking enough.
- Swap bedding for each cat once a week so they can recognise the other cat's scent.
- Offer canned food to each cat on their own side of the door. You may also use treats as well.
- When the cats are ready (cats are not swatting and hissing at each other through the door) you may place both cats in your living room. It's good to have a partner help with this part of the introduction. Make sure there are several escape routes in case they feel the need to separate. Give each cat their own interactive playtime session prior to meet time. This will acclimate them to each other in a non-confrontational way.
- When you return your new cat to his/her room, feed both cats on their own side of the door. This teaches them that each cat does not pose a threat and good things happen when they are near each other.
- Repeat this process until both cats get along.
- You may now start feeding both cats in the same room.
- At any time, if the cats are stressed or not getting along, repeat the interactive playtime sessions prior to a meal.

Introduction to Children

- Most importantly, cats are vertical creatures. They need what we like to call a "Cat Superhighway", (credit Jackson Galaxy). Cats need vertical shelves, cat trees or any type of object that can safely bear their weight. Being high up offers them safety and a good vantage point to view their new world. Keep in mind that cats like to knock things down, so provide some empty spaces for them to safely chill on.
- Always supervise your cat with your children of any age. This helps them acclimate, and if any unwanted behavior arises, you are there to intervene and show the cat what you would prefer them to do. Cats live in the moment, so if you don't witness the behavior and capture it while it's happening, you won't be able to correct or reward them in real time. This speeds up the training process tremendously.
- With very young children, measure up how far they can reach and start building your Cat Superhighway from that point. This gives your cat a safe area to play, run and relax out of your child's reach.

- Have supervised playtime with your child and cat when both are relaxed. This is a good time to show your child how to pet and brush a cat, and where your cat actually likes to be petted. Make sure to show your child that eyes, ears, tails and tummies are off limits. Cartoon pictures (available online or create your own) are very helpful to teach your child about body language.
- Most children view the litter box as a sandbox. You can baby gate off the doorway, and raise the gate enough for the cat to get under, but not the child. You can also use decorative screens or a high sided cardboard box with a hole cut in it for a cat entrance to keep litter boxes out of a child's view.
- No matter what age your children are, allow the cat to initialize interactions and always end on a good note. This will keep the cat interested and eager to engage with your children.

Introductions to Dogs

- Dog introductions can be tricky. Your dog might have grown up with cats and is very social, but this is a new cat. Never overestimate a situation.
- Provide the cat a Super Highway as a route to escape if he/she gets overwhelmed or is not having fun.
- If you know your dog loves cats already, you may begin the introductions in a spacious room. We recommend letting your cat decompress for a few days before introducing your dog. If needed, you may leash your dog or use baby gates for safety and let them meet that way. If your dog is behaving appropriately and the cat is not scared, you may start the meets in the same room off leash. Have treats ready and a partner to help if needed. Keep the meets short and sweet. Give the cat enrichment and solo playtime after each meet.
- If you do not know if your dog likes cats or if this cat likes dogs, start the introductions with the cat in his/her acclimation room and the dog on the other side of the door. Feed treats or canned food on both sides of the door. This teaches the cat and dog that good things happen when they meet. If either the cat or dog is reactive or uncomfortable, stay with this process as long as it takes, which could be weeks or months. When you are able to call your dog away from the door where the cat is and your dog can ignore the cat and give eye contact, reward with lots of treats. Let the dog sniff back at the door again and call him/her to you. Ask for a sit or a down and reward with treats or a favorite toy. If the cat is not hissing or upset, you may begin with meets in the same room. Go slow and watch body language on the cat and the dog.

Pheromones

- We cannot stress the importance of pheromones enough. Pheromones are what attract kittens to nursing moms. It is soothing and pleasant and can do wonders for unwanted behaviors and calming cats.
- If you use a plug-in, you will place it in a spot where your cat sleeps most often. You may put one in each room - try to place them where your cat spends most of his/her time.
- Pheromone collars are wonderful for scared cats and last for 4 weeks.
- Pheromone sprays can be sprayed on any surface you wish, including bedding.
- Pheromones can help with inappropriate scratching, as cats will feel calmer and not feel the need to scratch as much. There are pheromone options that encourage scratching appropriately and get applied directly to cat trees, scratchers, etc.

Litter Box

- Have one litter box per cat, plus one extra.
- Scoop litter boxes daily, disinfect monthly. Cleaning the box too often will remove a cat's odor and might encourage them to potty in inappropriate areas.
- Fill the box 2-3" deep. Too much litter makes a cat feel unstable like they are losing their balance, which might cause litter box aversion.
- Pay attention to the type of litter your cat prefers. Some cats like clumping litter and some cats do not. We do not recommend scented litter as cats prefer their own odor.
- If your cat stops using the litter box, a trip to the vet is in order. First thing is to rule out medical concerns. If you get the "all clear" from your vet, that leaves behavior. Remember cats don't like change, so even a change in your schedule at work, a new piece of furniture or an outdoor cat visiting on your porch could cause your cat to stop using the litter box.
- Make sure litter boxes are accessible and in convenient places for your cat to use. Even though they are unsightly to us, they are very welcoming to your cat.
- You may need to try different heights or widths of litter boxes to make your cat happy.
- Try a litter box attractant to encourage your cat to use it.
- Older cats tend to prefer softer litter. Try litter made from wood, corn or wheat. Anything that is softer than clay is a big help. Also, use a litter box with a lower side to make it easier for the cat to climb in and out of.

- Use an appropriate sized litter box. The larger the cat, the larger your box will need to be. Some smaller cats prefer larger boxes as well.

Body Language - Tails

- Cat tails are amazing at communicating their feelings.
- The tail straight up in the air with a curve at the tip is a confident cat saying hello.
- The tail lowered to half-mast can be neutral, friendly or exploratory. The situation at the time will help you interpret what your cat is telling you.
- The tail down can mean the cat is stalking a toy or something in motion - use caution with young children to clarify what your cat is saying. The tail down can also mean fear, particularly if your cat is crawling low to the ground while the tail is down.
- A completely tucked tail means your cat is very fearful and needs space. Let your cat calm down, play some soothing music, or bring out a favorite blanket. Sometimes you just need to shut the lights off and give the cat some quiet time.
- A bristled tail usually means the cat is about to pounce. Use caution and give your cat space.
- The quivering tail, also known as rattlesnake tail, means a lot of excitement. Use caution with this one, as overstimulation can lead to nipping. That's when you want to have a large toy the cat can safely nip and gives you a little time to teach your cats some tricks. For love biters (cats that overstimulate easily) teach him/her to high five for pets or head butt, etc. Not only is it super adorable, it is highly functional to teach your cat to redirect that extra energy instead of nipping you.
- Tail lashing is just like it sounds. The tail is whipping back and forth and your cat is frustrated and irritated. If you ignore the signs, the tail will increase speed. That is a complete hands off moment. Try to figure out what is upsetting your cat and diffuse the situation. Do not attempt to pick up the cat, you may be able to lure him/her away with a wand toy or some high value food. If that does not work, you can use something as a barrier so you can safely pass by until the cat is calm.

Body Language - Ears

- Upright ears mean your cat is alert and taking in sounds.
- Upright, but slightly rotated to the side means the cat is happy and relaxed.
- Flattened ears (we call them airplane ears) means the cat is afraid, the flatter the ears, the more fearful he/she is.

- Sideways and down ears means he/she is fearful, but gathering information.
- If the ears are down and completely backwards, the cat is anticipating a fight.

Body Language - Eyes

- Whale eyed - pupils are sideways and avoiding eye contact, preventing confrontation. This cat might be fearful, but might be trying to tell you or another animal that they mean no harm. Assess all the cat's body language to see how he/she is feeling. Use caution.
- Dilated pupils can mean that the lights are low, but can also mean the cat is fearful and trying to take in more of the environment to see if he/she should engage in fight or flight. Give this cat space and go slowly. This cat might be in defensive mode.
- Constricted pupils look like snake eyes, the pupil is a thin line. This cat is confident and relaxed.
- Relaxed eyes look like those adorable, baby cat eyes. All cute and cuddly and ready for snuggles. Your cat is probably smiling at you too.
- Blinking eyes are the best! If your cat is stressed or unsure, try slow blinking at him/her. Eventually, your cat will relax and blink back at you. Kind of the feline way to say "I love you" and it's super fun.

Body Language - Posture

- Forward pointing whiskers signify your cat is gathering information. This could mean your cat is play hunting, curious or getting ready to defensively pounce.
- Soft whiskers pointing to the side mean your cat is content and life is good.
- Flattened, backwards whiskers means your cat senses a threat and is trying to make themselves smaller. This is the time to provide a box to hide in, or perhaps drape a blanket over part of the chair to give your cat a safe vantage point.
- The classic "Halloween cat" - back arched, hair standing on end, probably hissing and growling - this cat is in defensive mode. Give your cat lots of space, try to remove anything that might be upsetting him/her.
- The 'shrinking violet' cat is trying to hide to appear non-threatening. This cat is curled up in a tiny ball with everything tucked in. Try providing a box or something for your cat to hide in. Do not corner this cat, just give him/her some room.
- The belly up cat is usually happy and relaxed. This is not an invitation to rub your cat's belly, unless you know they enjoy it. Use caution, for shy cats, this can be a way of preparing for an attack if needed.
- The square cat, completely mellow and his/her paws are tucked underneath them. This often follows a good yawn and stretch session.

- The “sphinx cat” has his/her paws stretched out in front of the body. This usually means the cat is content and you will often see drowsy eyes. Pay attention to the body, a happy cat is loose and relaxed. If the cat is crouching, it may look similar, but you will notice tension or tight blinking of the eyes which can signify pain and mean it’s time to go to the vet.

Behavior Issues - Time to go to the vet!

- Hiding - something in the home is scary or the cat is sick.
- Not using the litter box - medical issues or the cat is upset.
- Chewing on non food items - stress, anxiety or medical.
- Sudden aggression - the cat is likely lashing out due to pain or discomfort. It can also occur if you have stray cats hanging around your house, which causes your cat to become territorial.
- Increase of vocalization - can be hyperthyroidism or for older cats - hearing and vision loss or dementia.
- Overgrooming/Scratching - could be allergies, skin issues, parasites or stress.
- Excessive sleeping - if your cat is sleeping more than usual and withdrawn, it could be due to stress or something medical.

Cat Scratchers - Why you don’t need or want to declaw

- Where to scratch is one of the most important things to teach your cat about as soon as you arrive home.
- Cats like different textures and materials to scratch. Try using carpet squares, sisal rope, wood, cardboard, emery boards and fabric patches.
- You can use a scratch attractant pheromone spray on the things you want the cat to scratch. You can also put catnip on the scratcher or rub one of your shirts on it to add your scent.
- Make sure your scratcher is stable, you can anchor it down if it is not. The biggest reason cats like to scratch furniture is it is stable enough to allow them to stretch with full body weight while they scratch.
- Place double sided sticky tape on surfaces you don’t want your cat to scratch.
- Place several scratchers near where you spend a lot of time and where the items you do not want the cat to scratch are.
- Attach a wand toy to your scratchers to make them more fun.
- Reward your cat with treats and canned food when he/she scratches appropriately.
- Do Not Ever Declaw Your Cat! Declawing amputates the cat’s toes up to the first joint.

- Declawing will cause pain and distress.
- Declawing will lead to behavior issues and can increase aggression.
- Declawing is painful and causes litter box issues. It is uncomfortable for the cat to walk on litter, causing the cat to avoid using it and pottying elsewhere.
- Declawing will certainly lead to early arthritis.
- Do NOT declaw, it is so much easier and kinder to teach your cat to scratch appropriately.
- Regular nail trims once a month or as needed will eliminate excessive scratching.

Keeping your Cat Indoors

- It was previously thought that cats need to go outdoors to be happy. We have since learned that is not the case. Provide your cat with window seats so they can happily bird watch and explore the outdoors from a front row seat indoors.
- Provide an ample amount and variety of toys to allow your cat to safely “hunt” indoors.
- Provide several types of scratchers to keep your cat happy.
- Build your cat superhighway - clear some shelves and add a few more if you don't have many. Incorporate the furniture you already have to allow your cat ample space to run around.
- You will need to restrict your cat's access to exterior doors until he/she learns to stay inside.
- You can build a catio if you have an escape artist that is difficult to contain.
- You can harness train your cat to walk on a leash for supervised expeditions.
- Keeping your cat indoors keeps them safe from fights, disease and parasites.

Rough Play and High Prey Drive

- Most kittens and some adult cats have a very high prey drive.
- Give your cats plenty of interactive toys such as wands, motion activated toys and large stuffed animals. These will help wear out excessive energy and can help prevent bites and scratches.
- Laser toys: be cautious with their use. If cats never “catch the red dot” they can feel frustrated and develop behavioral problems. If you choose to use a laser, make sure you do not accidentally direct the light to their eyes and make sure when the cat “catches the red dot” that you reward them with a high value treat or toy to prevent frustration.
- Harness walks can help a cat expend energy with supervised outdoor visits.

- Make sure your cat gets plenty of exercise.
- Many cats prefer to have a friend, consider getting another cat that has a similar personality and play style.
- Make sure your cat does not have access to fragile items, they are likely to shove things off of shelves and tables.
- Provide different types of scratchers such as sisal rope, carpet and cardboard. If your cat does not use them, you can try pheromones on the scratchers to attract the cat to use them.

Toxic Plants/Food for Cats

Many plants are poisonous or toxic to cats and kittens. If you notice your furry friend eating any plant that you're unsure of, call your vet.

Below are just a few of the most common plants that are poisonous for your cat or kitten to eat:

- | | | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|
| ● Amaryllis | ● Lily | ● Pothos, Devil's Ivy |
| ● Autumn Crocus | ● Lily of the Valley | ● Sago Palm |
| ● Azaleas and Rhododendrons | ● Caffeine | ● Spanish Thyme |
| ● Castor Bean | ● Chocolate | ● Tulip |
| ● Chrysanthemum | ● Garlic | ● Yew |
| ● Daffodils | ● Grapes | ● Poinsettia |
| ● Dieffenbachia | ● Milk | ● Christmas Trees/ Cacti |
| ● English Ivy | ● Mushrooms | ● Mistletoe |
| ● Hyacinths | ● Onions | ● Spring Bulbs |
| ● Kalanchoe | ● Raisins | ● Holl |
| | ● Marijuana | |
| | ● Oleander | |
| | ● Peace Lily | |

While all of the plants listed above are toxic to cats, perhaps the most dangerous is the lily. Lilies can cause kidney failure in cats who come in contact with the flower's pollen, then ingest the pollen during grooming. If you have cut flowers in the house, including lilies, be sure to keep your flowers in a room where they will not come in contact with your cat. If you suspect your cat has ingested anything toxic, call your vet immediately.

Adult Cat/Kitten Diet

Currently the cat you have adopted is on Purina Cat Chow dry food that they receive $\frac{1}{4}$ cup, as well as a teaspoon of wet food (Fancy Fest, Purina or Friskies) twice daily. You are welcome to keep them in this diet, if you decide to change the type of dry food they are on please follow the chart below.

Adult Cat Diet Weaning Chart	
a.m.	p.m.
1/8 cup Purina Cat or Kitten Chow dry and 1/8 cup (NEW FOOD). one scoop of wet food	1/8 cup Purina Cat or Kitten Chow dry and 1/8 cup (NEW FOOD). one scoop of wet food
1/8 cup Purina Cat or Kitten Chow dry and 1/8 cup (NEW FOOD). one scoop of wet food	1/8 cup Purina Cat or Kitten Chow dry and 1/8 cup (NEW FOOD). one scoop of wet food
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1/4 cup (NEW FOOD). one scoop of wet food	1/4 cup (NEW FOOD). one scoop of wet food
1/4 cup (NEW FOOD). one scoop of wet food	1/4 cup (NEW FOOD). one scoop of wet food

Cats adopted from the pet store are going to be on a different dry food, please check with the store you adopt from and follow the weaning chart if necessary.

Cats are not like people or dogs. They are carnivores and are adapted to eat a diet high in protein whenever possible. Their overall health can be significantly improved if this high-protein diet is in the form of canned wet food to help maintain good hydration and satiety (i.e., a feeling of fullness after eating). We would suggest keeping them on a diet including wet and dry food daily.

Cat Vaccination Schedule

Check with your veterinarian to see what they suggest but we suggest following this schedule for kittens and your adult cats yearly.

- 6-8 weeks:
 - FVRCP required
- 10-12 weeks:
 - FVRCP required (second in series)
- 14-16 weeks:
 - FVRCP required (third in series)
 - Rabies required by law
- 1-year booster (annual vaccines):
 - FVRCP booster required
 - Rabies booster required by law

HOW TO COPE WITH ALLERGIES TO PETS

Limit pet's access around the house

- Limits the areas dander will spread to.
- No pets in the bedroom until symptoms subside.
- Limit access to furniture or cover with sheets that can easily be washed.
- During high allergy seasons, keep pet in an area of the home that does not have carpet, until symptoms subside

Herbal Supplements and Natural Remedies

- Be sure to take a quality vitamin, particularly vitamin C.
- Ask your doctor what herbal supplements are safe for you to take.
- There are holistic drops that help boost immunity to dander allergies.
- Steam up your bathroom with hot water and stand in for 5-10 minutes to relieve congestion.
- Use a vaporizer to alleviate congestions
- Saline nasal spray may be recommended by your doctor.
- Over the counter eye drops are helpful for itchy eyes.
- Ask your doctor if Neem cream would benefit your skin if you get hives.

Air Purification

- Invest in a quality air purifier for rooms you spend the most time in. A portable one is easy to move around the house.
- Use quality filters in your furnace such as HEPA filters.
- Change filters monthly.
- Keep windows closed during peak mold/pollen times to relieve seasonal allergies which can make dander allergies more intense.
- Keep furnace and AC units very clean and vacuum as needed to reduce dust.

Clean Regularly

- Vacuum frequently to remove dust, pollen and mold.
- Dust with a damp cloth or microfiber to trap more dust and keep it from blowing in the air.
- Wash pet toys and bedding weekly or as needed.
- Vacuum upholstery weekly or as needed, especially under cushions and in crevices.
- Wash your bedding frequently or at least tumble in the dryer on high for 20 minutes.

Grooming

- Weather permitting, groom outdoors! This prevents shedding and dander buildup in your home. Not recommended for cats unless they are secured in a harness.
- During inclement weather, wear a mask to reduce breathing in allergens.
- Use a quality brush to remove excess fur, this keeps it from floating around the air.
- For dogs, bathe monthly to prevent dander build-up.
- Wash your hands thoroughly after each grooming, try not to touch your eyes or face.
- If you are having persistent dander allergies, it's a great idea to take a steamy shower after grooming to clear up your sinuses.
- Wear a smock during grooming or some old clothes that you do not mind getting dirty and don't wear frequently. Change after a grooming session.
- Take your pet to a professional groomer! Let us know if you need recommendations. Pets love spa days too.
- Keep nails trimmed to prevent scratches.
- Try dander sprays for cats and dogs, they are made specifically to safely remove dander from your pet's coat and can be used frequently, in between baths.

- Do not bathe your pet too frequently as it dries their coat out and causes more dander.
- Ask your vet about skin supplements for your pet, to help reduce dander.

Flooring

- Hardwood and laminate floors are easier to keep clean.
- Damp mop bare floors daily to reduce allergens.
- If removing carpet is not an option, vacuum daily.
- Check with a carpet company for more tips on keeping carpet clean.
- Use runner rugs and small carpets in areas you frequent the most to keep your carpets clean.

Hot Beverages

- Hot tea/juices can help open sinuses up and relieve your itchy throat.
- Avoid dairy products in your beverage when your allergies are the worst.
- If you can have honey, it coats your throat and has a lot of immune boosting properties, check with your doctor.
- Peppermint tea can provide extra relief.
- Avoid highly caffeinated beverages during peak allergy times, caffeine can exacerbate symptoms.
- Plain hot water with lemon also provides relief.

Whichever methods you try for reducing allergies, it can take a month for you to adjust to your new pet. The most important thing is to reduce the amount of dander in the air with good filtration. Keep your house clean. Don't allow pets in your bedroom or on furniture until you adjust. The slower you go with allowing your body to adjust to a new pet, the less severe your symptoms are likely to be. Check with your doctor or veterinarian before taking any type of supplements or over the counter medicine or giving your pet any supplements or medications.

Maddie's Pet Assistant

Maddie's® Pet Assistant (MPA) is a free app developed by Maddie's Fund® to provide you with support after you bring a dog or cat home. Whether you are a seasoned foster caregiver, or just adopted your first pet - the app will provide help and maybe even teach you a few new tricks.

For example:

Kitty has a cold? Pup pooped where he shouldn't? Let's see what the experts say!

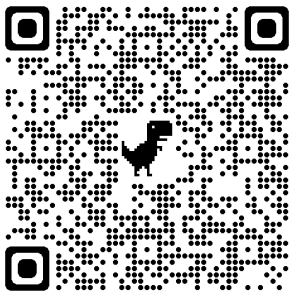
Introducing a new pet to your current pets? We've got you!

Need tips for your counter-surfing dog? Or constantly meowing cat? Advice is on the way!

If you indicate a concern in one of our check-in surveys, you'll receive an immediate response in the app and in email, with tips, advice and resources crafted by shelter medicine veterinarians and behaviorists to help you resolve the issue. It's all about support.

You can also receive vaccination reminders, track your pet's weight, post questions to a community forum and more – all through the app! So, what are you waiting for?

[Download the app](#) through the [App Store](#) or [Google Play](#) and register for an account today!



Contact us with any questions at:

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