BEHAVIOR

Bringing Home a New Cat: The First 30 Days

How to help a new cat settle in: what to get before day one, a safe room, the first days of hiding, food and litter, opening up the house, meeting your other cat, building trust, and when to call the vet.

By Catt County Cat Nippers • Reviewed October 27, 2026 • 8 min read • 4 cited sources

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The short answer

Start your new cat in one quiet room with food, water, a litter box, a bed, a scratching post and places to hide, and let it come out in its own time. Keep the food and litter it already knows. Open up the rest of the house once it walks around its room comfortably: after a few days for some cats, several weeks for others.

Expect hiding, a small appetite and night-time trips to the litter box at first. During the first few days, sometimes weeks, a cat might hide and not eat or use the litter box as often as normal, Best Friends Animal Society says. Letting it come out when it is ready shows it that it is in control, which builds its confidence and your bond.

AT A GLANCE

- Feed what your cat ate before. To change food, wait until it is eating regularly, then mix the new food in over a week, as in Best Friends Animal Society's 7-day food switch.

The first 30 days at a glance

WHAT A NEW CAT MAY DO IN ITS FIRST MONTH, AND WHAT YOU CAN DO

When	What your cat may do	What you do

When	What your cat may do	What you do
Before day one	Not home yet	Get the supplies, set up a safe room, and find out which food and litter it is used to
Days 1–3	Hides; eats and uses the litter box mostly at night	Keep it quiet. Fresh food and water every day; check the litter box
Days 4–7	Starts to explore its room and watch you	Sit in the room, play with a wand toy, and start any food change once it eats well
Weeks 2–3	Walks around its room comfortably; asks for attention	Open more rooms one at a time, introduce other pets slowly, and see the vet
Week 4	Follows a routine, plays, rests in the open	Add food puzzles; keep routines steady

Every cat is different: it can take some cats several weeks to feel safe in a new home, International Cat Care says. Move on when your cat is ready, not by the calendar.

Before your cat comes home

Have everything ready before the first day, so the arrival is quiet. Best Friends Animal Society's new cat checklist:

- Food and water bowls.
- The food your cat is used to eating, and some treats.
- A collar with an ID tag, with a breakaway clasp.
- A cat bed.
- Toys: a wand toy is great for bonding.
- A brush.
- A litter box and the litter your cat already knows.
- A tall, sturdy scratching post.

> **Ask the shelter or previous home which food and litter your cat is used to, and stick with both at first. If you can, bring home a piece of its bedding: something familiar when everything else is new.**

This quick sheet is the start of the guide. Still to read: Set up a safe room, Day one, The first week: hiding, eating and the litter box and 8 more sections, plus the New Cat Settling-In Planner. Read it all free when you join our pet health emails at cattcountycatnippers.org/articles/bringing-home-a-new-cat-first-30-days

Sources

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