

# 10 Things your cat needs when joining your family

By Joel Kaye, DVM

Bringing a new cat or kitten home is exciting, but it can be stressful wondering if you have fully prepared to ensure a successful transition for your new feline family member. Here are recommendations to help make the process seamless.

1. Pet Carrier – A carrier is important for transport, but also important to give your new kitten a safe haven and hiding place. This is especially important at the beginning to allow them to acclimate to their new surroundings. There are many options, including soft, bag-like carriers or hard carriers. No matter which you choose, make sure the carrier is large enough for your cat to comfortably turn around inside, and that the bottom of the carrier is solid enough to provide secure footing for your furry friend. Look for a carrier that will be easy to clean in case the interior becomes soiled.
2. Food and water bowls – Try to use ceramic or stainless steel bowls as some cats can have contact allergies to plastic materials.
3. Good quality kitten food – It is okay to offer a combination of canned and dry formulations. Food selection should be based on your kitty's age or any health conditions. For example, older cats prone to constipation may benefit from the hydrating effects of canned food while kittens require specific nutrients available in kitten formulas. Following portion recommendations on the bag can help prevent obesity and related health complications. Be sure to adjust your food choice appropriately as your kitten grows. Base your choice on research and veterinary recommendations.
4. Litter box and litter scoop – Try different types and formulations of litter to see which your cat prefers. It is important to keep litter boxes out of areas of high traffic or noise. The general formula is to provide one more litter box than the number of cats in the home.
5. A soft cat bed – Cats spend much of their time sleeping, and a comfortable cat bed quickly can become their favorite spot. Some cats prefer covered “hide-away” beds while others are drawn to a traditional style. Often the location of the bed (near sunlight or a radiator) can impact its allure. Older, arthritic cats may enjoy heated beds. If using a heated bed, be sure to select a low wattage (e.g., 4-watt) bed specifically made for cats. Never use a human heating pad which can pose a risk of burns.
6. A collar and identification tag – This is in addition to placement of a microchip in the future. The collar should be a break-away style in case the kitten gets caught.
7. A variety of toys and scratching posts – Catnip-stuffed toy mice and feather wands can entertain and tire out your kitty, helping to ensure a solid night's sleep for the rest of the household. Avoid toys that contain strings or small objects that your cat could ingest. Scratching posts can save your furniture and let your cat stretch their backs comfortably. Your cat may prefer a traditional vertical variety or perhaps a horizontal cardboard version.
8. Cat nail trimmer and tooth brushing kit – It is never too early to get your kitten acclimated to having their feet and mouth handled. This will make it much easier in the future to brush their teeth, trim their nails and administer medications. Check out [angell.org/video](http://angell.org/video) for tips on trimming your cat's nails.
9. A good quality brush such as the Furminator can prevent matted fur, and many cats enjoy being brushed.
10. A veterinarian with whom you feel you can have a long-term trusting relationship. Certainly do your research online, and ask other friends and neighbors which veterinarians they use.

