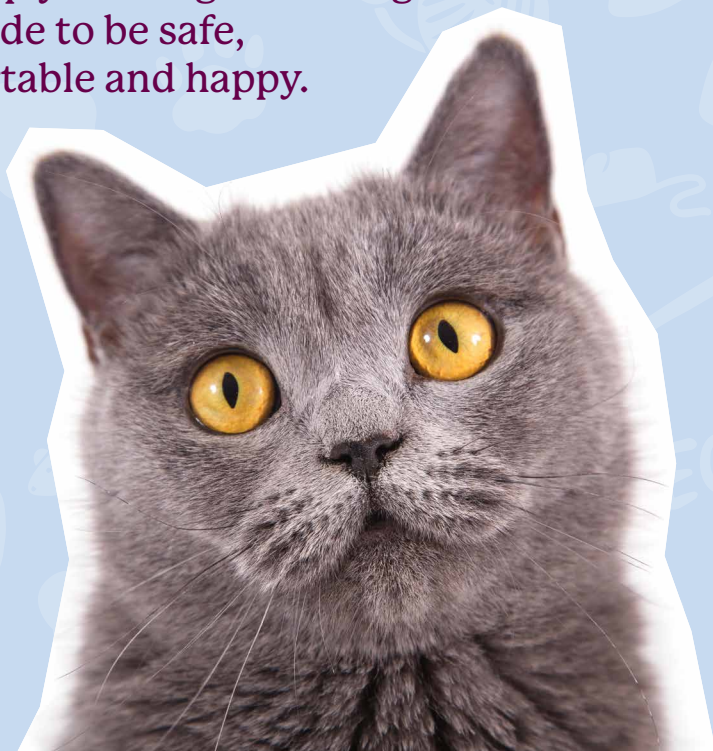


# Roam to home

A step-by-step guide that  
will help you bring a roaming  
cat inside to be safe,  
comfortable and happy.





### **Acknowledgements**

The Dog and Cat Management Board is grateful for Julia Henning's work creating the concept and content for Roam to Home. Julia holds a bachelor of animal behaviour with honours, and at the time of publishing, is completing a PhD focused on cat behaviour.

# There's lot of good reasons to keep your cat home—for their safety, to comply with local laws or for conserving wildlife.

Ideally, cats should live indoors with access to some outdoor enclosed space. But what if you can't modify the entries to your home and yard to stop your cat roaming into danger? Then this *Roam to home* guide is a great option.

We'll show you step-by-step how to help your cat live comfortably inside without depriving them of their health or happiness.

It could take as little as four weeks to help a roaming cat transition to living permanently indoors. Some might adapt quicker. Others longer. That's okay, just be patient and stick to the plan. Our troubleshooting tips will help keep you on track, and you can also check our regularly updated frequently asked questions over on our website.

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## 1 | Getting started

Lots of cats can (and do) live happy, healthy lives entirely indoors because their humans have set them up for success.

So, let's get started by setting up your home to be a safe, comfortable place for your cat. Here we explain what you need to do and why. Use the checklist on **page 9** to make sure you have everything in place before you start bringing your cat inside.



## Natural born climbers

Cats are natural climbers and love to perch. Giving your cat stable vertical spaces to explore satisfies their natural instincts and provides a place to rest where they feel safe and secure.

### Vertical space could look like

- Cat trees and scratch posts.
- Cat shelves.
- Small beds placed in, or on top of, existing bookcases or cabinets.
- Have at least one vertical space per cat, plus an extra in separated locations as cats like choice.

## Cats need alone time too

Hiding spots give your cat a sense of ownership over their space and allow them to feel safe and relaxed. Hiding spots should be in a quiet location and household members should leave the cat alone when they go to this place.

### Hiding spots could look like

- A cardboard box.
- A hooded cat bed or 'igloo'.
- Space under your bed or in a cupboard.
- Aim for one hiding spot per cat at a minimum.



### Let them scratch

Support your cat's natural instinct to scratch by giving them appropriate scratching places. Scratching helps to keep your cat's claws and paws healthy, lets them stretch out their muscles, and very importantly, is how your cat deposits pheromones (their way of communicating by smell) which helps them feel at home in your house.

#### Scratching places could look like

- A scratch post or cardboard scratcher.
- A piece of carpet or surface covered in sisal rope.
- Place wherever your cat likes to scratch and make sure you have at least one per cat, plus an extra.

Cats have very individual tastes when it comes to scratching so try out a few different options and make sure to place your scratcher in an area your cat already likes to scratch, for example, next to the couch.

### Enrich their space

Cats need mental and physical stimulation to stay happy and healthy. Providing your home cat with enrichments is essential for their wellbeing and can reduce any unwanted behaviours.

#### Enrichments could look like

- Toys rotated regularly to keep your cat interested.
- Interactive play with you.
- A perch next to a window with sunlight and a view.
- Interactive toys or food puzzles (don't use for regular feeding).
- Cat safe plants like cat grass or cat mint.
- Training. Yep! Like dogs, cats can be trained with rewards and it stimulates their mind.

## **Make your home cat-safe**

Cats are curious creatures who love to explore, so it's important to make sure your house is safe for them. This includes securing windows, doors and furniture and removing dangerous substances.

### **Some dangers to cats could look like**

- Toxic plants.
- Medications.
- Human foods like onion, chocolate, grapes etc.
- Essential oils and cleaning products.
- Salt lamps.

## **Fresh water**

Cats are prone to urinary tract and kidney issues. To help prevent dehydration and other health issues, place fresh water in multiple places around the house. Bowls that can be easily cleaned are best and some cats prefer free flowing water from a drinking fountain. Keep their water separated and away from litter trays.

### **Fresh water could look like**

- Water bowls are emptied, rinsed and replenished daily and washed at least weekly.
- Drinking fountains that are cleaned weekly and have filters replaced as needed.
- At least one bowl for each cat and a backup.



## Let's talk litter boxes

Home cats still have the instinct to toilet like they would outside. The best way to support your cat's toileting instincts is to give them easy access to multiple clean, comfortable litter trays.

### A good litter tray set up could look like

- An open litter tray that is at least 1.5 times the length of your cat (you may have to try a few to find one your cat is comfortable using).
- At least one litter tray per cat plus an extra, in separate locations.
- Located in a quiet area of the house.
- Unscented litter that your cat feels comfortable using (you may have to try a few types).
- Kept clean with daily scooping.
- Regularly emptying, washing and drying the tray and replacing with fresh litter.

## Attention and affection

Cats need attention and affection just like any other pet. Make sure to spend time playing with your cat and give them plenty of cuddles and love. Don't force this, let your cat choose if and how they want to interact with you. If they don't feel like it, you will know and it's important to leave them be. If your cat doesn't like cuddles, find ways that they like interacting with you like play, training or being brushed.



## Set Up Checklist

- At least one vertical space per cat, plus one extra in separate locations
- At least one safe hiding space per cat, plus one extra in separate locations
- At least one scratch post per cat, plus one extra in separate locations
- At least one fresh water bowl per cat, plus one extra in separate locations
- At least one feeding station per cat, plus one extra in separate locations
- At least one litter tray per cat, plus one extra in separate locations
- Enrichment such as toys, cat grass and/or scents, in various locations
- House checked for anything toxic or dangerous
- Time set aside to give my cat attention each day
- At least one window with natural sunlight and a view available for my cat

## Maintenance

- Scoop litter trays daily
- Completely empty, clean and refill litter trays regularly
- Check and refresh water daily
- Watch my cat's behaviour to see if they like the scratch posts, litter trays and litter I've chosen for them
- Play/interact with my cat daily



## 2 | Reduce their roaming

Reducing your cat's roaming is best done as a gradual process. By making slow, incremental changes, you'll reduce any stress on your cat and increase your chance of success. Here are some ways to reduce your cat's roaming and prepare them for staying happy at home.

### **Make mealtimes at home only**

The best way to start increasing your cat's time at home, is to make their time spent inside exciting. And what's more exciting than food?! If you have previously fed your cat outside, switch to feeding them inside, within a room of your house. Once they're eating inside, extend the amount of time they are in. If your cat already eats inside, extend the amount of time you expect them in for meals.

### **Extending home time at mealtimes could look like**

- Once your cat comes in looking for breakfast or dinner, close all doors and windows.
- Keep them inside for 15 minutes before feeding and a further 15 minutes after feeding.
- Gradually extend the time before and after feeding each day.



## **Stay home during dawn, dusk and overnight**

If you're not already keeping your cat in at night, this is another good place to start. Keeping your cat in at night reduces their chance of being injured or lost. This can also reduce their impact on native wildlife. Night is not the only time to keep your cat safe at home.

It's also dangerous at dusk and dawn when many animals are more active. This is when your cat is more likely to find wildlife to hunt. While moving around, and potentially distracted and focused on hunting, cats are more vulnerable to being hurt or even killed by cars, dogs, foxes, and other cats.

## **Keeping your cat home at dawn, dusk and overnight could look like**

- Make your cat's mealtimes when they should be inside, which is just before sunset or after sunrise.
- Make home more exciting with regular play sessions or exciting treats at those times.

## **Make home more appealing**

In Step 1 you set up your environment with everything your cat needs plus some interesting things you'll start using now to make staying home more fun and enjoyable.

## **Making home more appealing than roaming could look like**

- Play with your cat each day, even five minutes helps.
- Provide interesting toys rotated regularly.
- Give your cat an extra tasty treat when they come home.
- Use the association of the tasty treat to train your cat to come when you call.
- Bring the outside in with 'cat-friendly' plants.
- If your cat is a cuddler, give them lots of cuddles and attention.
- Hide treats around your house for your cat to 'hunt'.

## Reduce your cat's ways to roam

If your cat has multiple ways of getting out, begin to permanently close off some exits until there is only one place left to enter and exit. To begin, talk with your family and decide what door will be the 'cat door'. Only let them out through this particular door.

If the cat asks to go out at any of the other doors or exits, do not let them out. This trains your cat that they can't just exit any door and helps you practice keeping doors closed. Once your cat is trained to use the one 'cat door', start training your cat to sit and wait until you tell them they are allowed out.

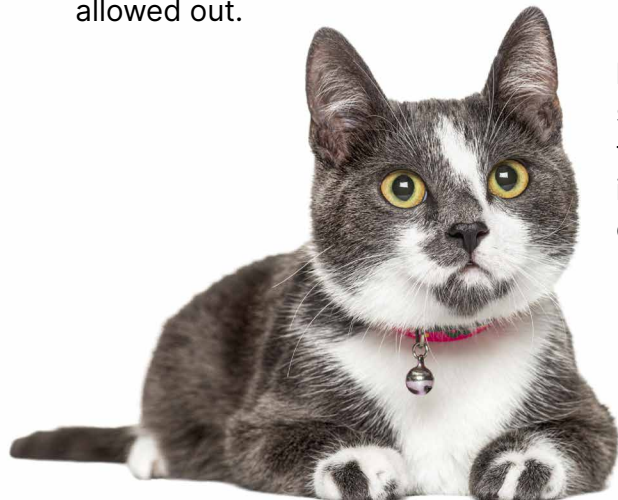
## Training them could look like

### 1. Making a seated position

Kneel in front of your cat and hold a treat between your finger and thumb about 1-2 cm away from your cat's nose. Slowly lift the treat up slightly higher (5cm) and then move it back towards their tail. Their gaze should follow, and they should naturally begin to sit. Hold the treat in position and give them a few seconds to sit if they don't do this right away.

### 2. Reward and repeat

Say 'yes' and give them the treat when they sit. Repeat the process another two times, before you take the treat away and instead ask them to sit with only your hand gesture. Using a lure (the food in the hand) is a good start but shouldn't be used more than three times or it will make it more difficult to get your cat to sit without a treat.



### 3. Verbal cue introduction

If you would prefer to use a vocal cue (like saying 'sit'), introduce this word one second before the hand signal and repeat until your cat associates it with sitting; reinforce this connection between the verbal cue and sitting by saying 'yes!' and giving lots of treats when your cat sits. Gradually you can stop using the hand cue and begin to just use the vocal cue. Or if you prefer, you can stick with the hand cue, or use both together.



MEOW

Be consistent and don't let them out unless they have sat and waited. This will help you control your cat's roaming and stops them from dashing out an open door when you don't want them to.

### 4. Get your cat to wait for the door

Encourage longer sits by gradually extending the time between your cat sitting and you saying 'yes!' This could be by just a few seconds at a time until you reach about 20 seconds. Make sure to give treats when you say 'yes!' Introduce a release cue after the yes such as 'okay', which indicates that it's okay for your cat to move or walk through the door now.

### 5. Reduce treat dependence

Gradually begin to ask your cat to sit without giving them a treat. Always say 'yes!' But begin to give treats only every second or third time and then every fourth and so on, until your cat sits without a treat.



### 6. Training sessions and patience

Keep training sessions to a maximum of three minutes. Aim for three such sessions a day, allowing breaks. Be patient, as cats vary in learning speed, and avoid frustration by taking breaks if needed. Never force your cat into a seated position as this can cause stress and may lead to behaviour problems or medical issues. Keep the training experience positive. Let your cat leave or stop the training if they aren't responding.

**Note:** When training your cat, ensure the information you are using utilises force-free, fear-free, positive training practices.

### Stick to your own backyard

If your cat usually roams wherever they like, try keeping them in your backyard. Eventually you might do this by harness training or installing an enclosed cat run. For now, simply monitor them when you let them outside and call them back in if you see them about to leave your yard. For some cats, this may mean that you only let them outside when you're home and can watch them.

#### This could look like

- Monitoring your cat in your yard when you're home.
- Call your cat when they go to leave the yard and reward with a tasty treat when they stay.



Over the next couple of weeks your cat will officially go from ‘roam to home’. This means no more outside time unless in a fully enclosed cat-run, a harness or you are closely monitoring them in your backyard. Be prepared for your cat to be initially frustrated with this lifestyle change. You can minimise that by continuing to reward them for behaviours you want to see, and ignoring or redirecting those you don’t.\*



### Designated time outside

Eventually, when your cat is eating and sleeping inside and coming back when called, reduce their roaming so they are only going out for a short supervised time each day. This should be no longer than an hour.

Try to keep to the same time each day so your cat learns when they are allowed out. Ideally, make it close to a feeding time so your cat comes in when you want them to. Some cats will take longer to get to this point and that's okay, just take things slower at their own pace.

### Remember to

- Get them to sit and wait at the ‘cat door’ before letting them out.
- This is supervised time, so go out with them and call them back if they are about to leave your property.
- Reward them with treats or a meal when you bring them back in.

\* See Step 4: Troubleshooting on page 23

- Be strict to not let them outside at other times. They may ask, but don't let them or you may undo the training so far. Offer them some fun activities inside your house instead, like play time.

## Cold turkey

If your cat has adjusted to all the steps so far, it's now time to cut off your cat's roaming completely. This means keeping doors closed and blocking all possible escape routes such as windows without screens, cat or dog doors. If you've gradually increased your cat's home time at a pace that's been comfortable to them, this shouldn't be too big of a change for your cat, but it may still cause some stress.

You may notice an increase in behaviours that you or your family find problematic (e.g., meowing more or scratching up furniture). These behaviours may be due to your cat's frustration or seeking to be let outside again. You can minimise these behaviours by continuing to reward those you want to

see and don't engage with, or re-direct the behaviours you don't (see 'redirecting, not just ignoring' at Step 4 on **page 27**).

Be patient and provide activities, support and rewards that make being inside enjoyable for your cat. Despite what your cat may try telling you, at this stage, cats can be very happy at home and have fulfilling lives without needing to roam. Stick to your plan and remind your cat of the good things about being inside.

## Remember to

- Keep your cat at home and only allow them outside on a harness or in a cat run.
- Increase play time, cuddle time and enrichments to keep your cat entertained and content.
- Reward your cat for being home.

## Step 3

Continues on page 21

# Roam to Home Planner

**1** First make sure you've completed the checklist on **page 9**. Then your home is a safe happy place for your cat and you can start working with your cat to reduce their roaming.

**2** For a week or two, aim to do each task for your cat each day (white box) and then observe it (blue box). Record your progress by crossing out, circling or making notes.

## DAY 1

A treat for being in  
Meal  mins before let out  
 Play  Cuddles  
 Training

Stayed in  mins after eating  
 Played inside

## DAY 2

A treat for being in  
Meal  mins before let out  
 Play  Cuddles  
 Training

Stayed in  mins after eating  
 Played inside

## DAY 3

A treat for being in  
Meal  mins before let out  
 Play  Cuddles  
 Training

Stayed in  mins after eating  
 Played inside

## DAY 4

A treat for being in  
Meal  mins before let out  
 Play  Cuddles  
 Training

Stayed in  mins after eating  
 Played inside

## DAY 5

A treat for being in  
Meal  mins before let out  
 Play  Cuddles  
 Training

Stayed in  mins after eating  
 Played inside

## DAY 6

A treat for being in  
Meal  mins before let out  
 Play  Cuddles  
 Training

Stayed in  mins after eating  
 Played inside

## DAY 7

A treat for being in  
Meal  mins before let out  
 Play  Cuddles  
 Training

Stayed in  mins after eating  
 Played inside

## Notes

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Continue recording your daily progress until your cat is only spending one hour out.

**DAY**

- A treat for being in
- Meal  mins before let out
- Play    Cuddles
- Training

- Stayed in  mins after eating
- Played inside

**DAY**

- A treat for being in
- Meal  mins before let out
- Play    Cuddles
- Training

- Stayed in  mins after eating
- Played inside

**DAY**

- A treat for being in
- Meal  mins before let out
- Play    Cuddles
- Training

- Stayed in  mins after eating
- Played inside

**DAY**

- A treat for being in
- Meal  mins before let out
- Play    Cuddles
- Training

- Stayed in  mins after eating
- Played inside

**DAY**

- A treat for being in
- Meal  mins before let out
- Play    Cuddles
- Training

- Stayed in  mins after eating
- Played inside

**DAY**

- A treat for being in
- Meal  mins before let out
- Play    Cuddles
- Training

- Stayed in  mins after eating
- Played inside

**DAY**

- A treat for being in
- Meal  mins before let out
- Play    Cuddles
- Training

- Stayed in  mins after eating
- Played inside

**DAY**

- A treat for being in
- Meal  mins before let out
- Play    Cuddles
- Training

- Stayed in  mins after eating
- Played inside

**DAY**

- A treat for being in
- Meal  mins before let out
- Play    Cuddles
- Training

- Stayed in  mins after eating
- Played inside

## Notes

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3

Your cat is now spending only one hour out and you're gradually reducing that each day around the same time (record these details to keep you on track)

DAY

When my cat asked to go out, I offered alternatives

My cat sat at the door before I let them out

Cat spent time outside

Went out at:  am/pm

I rewarded my cat for being in

DAY

When my cat asked to go out, I offered alternatives

My cat sat at the door before I let them out

Cat spent time outside

Went out at:  am/pm

I rewarded my cat for being in

DAY

When my cat asked to go out, I offered alternatives

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Cat spent time outside

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When my cat asked to go out, I offered alternatives

My cat sat at the door before I let them out

Cat spent time outside

Went out at:  am/pm

I rewarded my cat for being in

## Notes

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**4**

**Ready to go cold turkey?** No escapes. Doors closed. Plenty of play. Rewards for being home. Clean litter and water. Attention = play or training. Record anything you notice.

**DAY**

**Notes**

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**DAY**

**Notes**

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**DAY**

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**DAY**

**Notes**

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**5**

**Need help?**

Check **page 23** for 'trouble shooting'. Don't forget you might progress quicker or slower and that's okay.

## Doorway management

It's time to establish a routine to keep your cat in, even when you need to go out. This means talking with your family about how to handle doors when entering and exiting the home.

If you share your home with a dog and have a dog door, you may need to fill it in or remove it. If your dog and cat have a significant size difference, a dog flap with magnets that are too strong for the cat to push open or an electronic device which only lets specific animals out could be an alternative option. However, your cat may run out behind the dog and get stuck.

The last thing you want is your cat outside with no way of getting back in, so consider these options carefully and weigh up whether the benefits of having the dog door outweigh the risks.

### Remember to

- Talk to your family, house guests and visitors about keeping doors closed.
- Fill in any cat or dog doors.
- Keep an eye on your cat when you let dogs out or leave the house.

## House keeping

When your cat was roaming, they may have used that time to toilet or scratch or stretch. Now they are inside, you may see an increase in their litter tray use and scratching or running around the house. It's important to keep spaces clean for your cat, especially areas where they eat, drink or toilet as cats are very sensitive to smells and mess. Cats won't want to use a dirty litter tray or eat in a room near smelly litter.

### Remember to

- Scoop litter trays daily and completely clean regularly.
- Make sure water is fresh and clean.
- Check if your cat is using their scratch post and if not, try a different size, texture or shape.
- Increase any play time to control energy levels.
- Spread resources around the house, with food and water kept well away from litter trays.

## Expect some stress behaviours

Change can be stressful, and initially you may notice your cat seems frustrated, sits near the door, vocalises more or is scratching the furniture. These behaviours are to be expected and should reduce with time.

Setting up your house to be pleasant and fun should reduce any stress on your cat. If they're still begging to roam, you need to stay firm on keeping them in, or you risk reinforcing that meowing or being destructive is a way to being allowed out. Instead, focus on showing them inside is fun and comfy by distracting them with play, food or comfort.

If you've tried everything, given it some time, and your cat is still not settling, seek advice from a force-free trainer or a veterinary behaviourist.

## Distracting your cat could look like

- Move scratch posts to any areas your cat has begun to scratch.
- If you notice attention-seeking behaviour to be let out, give them a different sort of attention like playing, or doing some sitting training.
- Importantly: If your cat shows any serious behaviours such as urinating outside of the litter tray, or injuring themselves, other pets or people, seek veterinary advice immediately.



## 4 | Troubleshooting

Now that your cat is settling into home life, you can switch from establishing routines to maintaining them. You might have found that playing each day or having some treats at the ready to distract them from the door are the best ways for you to keep your cat inside and happy. Or maybe you found other routines and interactions which worked for you and your cat. Whatever it is that worked, stick with it, and be consistent.

Cats love consistency and often get stressed if their routines change. That being said, if you start noticing unwanted behaviours sneaking in, or escape attempts increasing, switch things up to try finding something that works. This might be seeking help from a veterinary behaviourist or force-free trainer who can watch your cat's behaviour and give you tailored suggestions to solve the issues you're experiencing. Below are some common issues you might face and suggestions to help solve them.



### Cat fights

If you have multiple cats, you may find that when you keep them at home they begin to hiss or growl at each other or begin to pick fights. This can be due to the stress of change from staying home and may settle down on its own. It may also be due to a lack of space or resources for the number of cats in the house.

The first thing to do is to ensure you have ample resources in separate locations. This includes litter trays, water bowls, food, hiding spaces, perching places, beds, toys and time with you. If you notice your cats starting to bicker, try to identify any resources you might need to increase. Add more while keeping an eye on the bickering to see if it stops.

If it doesn't reduce, it may be that the space is too small for the number of cats you have. In this case, emphasise having spaces where the cats can get away from each other and try to increase the space as much as you can. This may involve

installing more vertical spaces such as shelves or building an outdoor cat run where your cats can enjoy some safe outside time. Similarly, if your cat is getting annoyed with your dog or another household animal (or child), make sure they have their own spaces where they can go to get respite and everyone in the household knows to leave them alone.

### Reducing fights could look like

- Make sure there are enough resources for the number of cats.
- Give your cats their own spaces where they can get away from each other or where you can separate them if they begin to fight.
- If the above tips don't help, seek assistance from a veterinary behaviourist or force-free trainer. Early intervention is best, so it's worth contacting them if your cats are still fighting after a few days.

## Allergies

You may already know or have discovered through this process that you or a family member are allergic to cats. Most cat allergies are caused by a protein in the cat's saliva which is deposited on their fur and skin that can get into the air or on your hands or face. Therefore, to help reduce your allergies, you'll need to reduce the amount of this allergen in your house.

## Reducing allergens could look like

- Avoid touching your face and eyes after handling your cat.
- Always wash your hands after handling a cat.
- Regularly clean surfaces, floors and upholstery.
- Clean litter daily.
- Groom your cat outside to reduce the amount of cat hair in your home.
- Establish some cat-free areas in the house, such as the bedroom.
- Vacuum with a HEPA filter and use air purifiers.
- Consider speaking to your doctor about ways to manage your allergies medically.



### Non-stop meowing

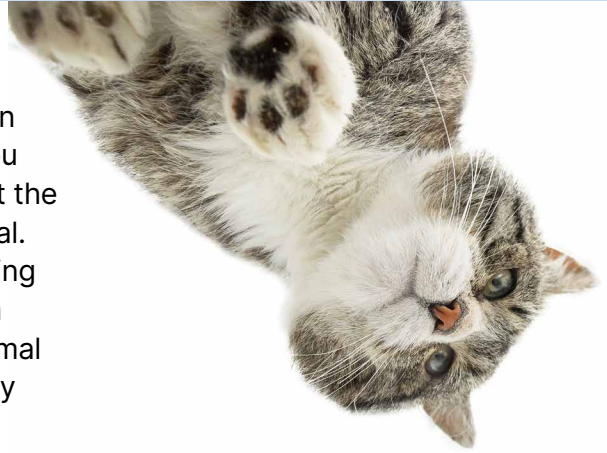
Cats meow to get our attention and tell us what they need. You might notice your cat sitting at the door, meowing more than usual. This can be frustrating, tempting you to let your cat out to roam again. Remember this is a normal reaction for your cat and it may take a few weeks to stop.

First, check that nothing else may be causing your cat's stress or frustration. Consider any other recent changes, or differences in behaviour, and if necessary, seek guidance from a veterinary behaviourist or force-free trainer. If, after this, the frustration still appears to come from the decrease in roaming, the best thing to do is ignore, interrupt or redirect this behaviour and give your cat time to adjust.

If it is truly driving you mad, there are a few things you can do.

First up, cats learn best when given positive reinforcement. This is where you reward or reinforce the behaviours that you want to see.

You might have heard or read about suggestions to punish behaviours you don't like, but this is detrimental to your cat's wellbeing and your relationship. Also it doesn't work long term and will most likely lead to stress and other unwanted behaviours. Instead, focus on using positive reinforcement for behaviours you do like (such as being quiet) and ignoring, interrupting and redirecting those you don't (such as meowing).



## Redirecting, not just ignoring

It's important to pay attention to your cat and their needs. So, in general, ignoring them is not a good idea. The one exception to this is when they are performing a behaviour (such as meowing at a door) in order to get your attention. Ignoring this behaviour isn't exactly what it sounds like either. What you are actually trying to do is to disconnect their behaviour from whatever is reinforcing it by not engaging with it.

Reinforcing is rewarding the behaviour, in effect encouraging your cat to keep doing it. In many instances the reinforcement may be your attention. The cat meows and you give them attention. But it can also be a self-rewarding behaviour. For instance, the cat meows because they are feeling anxious or frustrated and performing the behaviour (e.g. meowing or scratching furniture) gives them some relief from the frustration. In this case, ignoring won't work and may make things worse.

The first step to changing the behaviour, is figuring out why your cat is doing it. Do they want your

attention? Are they alleviating their stress? Is it simply fun for them?

Once you understand why, you can start training them out of it. If it's to get your attention, you can ignore it BUT this isn't simply not engaging with your cat, it's important to begin interrupting this behaviour when you see it about to happen. For example, if you see your cat walking to the door they always meow at, interrupt that behaviour by calling them over or giving them something more interesting to do such as playing with them. Or ask them to do something else (like the 'sit' command or something else) and reward them for it, with a treat.

Similarly, you can re-direct your cat to perform a more desirable behaviour, even if they've started performing the one you don't like. If your cat is already meowing at the door, you can use a positive interrupter—this can be a word or sound you've taught your cat to mean 'stop what you're doing and pay attention to me!' and comes with a tasty reward. Positive interrupters can be very useful in keeping your cat (or dog) safe.

Many dog owners use commands like this to get their dog's attention in potentially dangerous situations, say to stop them from running after something they see on a walk. These commands can be used in many ways to direct your cat from an undesirable behaviour, towards a desirable one.

For an easy positive interrupter, try saying 'what's this?' or 'look at me' in a raised pitch that sounds friendly and different from your usual talking voice. Be sure to follow up with a big tasty reward.

Once you have your cat paying attention, you can redirect them to a different behaviour like asking them to play, doing a short, fun training set with them (e.g. sit, lay down, high five etc.) or whatever else you would like them to do instead. Remember to reward this behaviour. By ignoring the behaviour you don't want and interrupting and redirecting, your cat has less opportunity to engage in the unwanted behaviour. With less repeats, the behaviour can begin to disappear.

Redirection can relieve their stress or get your attention in ways more desirable to you. Remember, ignoring doesn't mean ignore your cat completely, it means don't connect the undesirable behaviour to giving your cat their desired reward. So don't let your cat out just because they meow, instead give them something else to do.

### **Reinforcing behaviours you want could look like**

- Give your cat a treat when you see them sitting quietly or playing with a toy or scratch post.
- Ignoring your cat when they are meowing by the door—this means don't respond in any way.
- If you have harness-trained your cat: Never take them out when they're meowing to go, only when they're quiet or displaying preferred behaviour. Ideally, have a cue for walk time. Saying 'walkies!' will do. Train your cat that walks and outside time only happen when you give this cue.

## **Taking their frustrations out on you and the house**

Some cats may become destructive when first kept at home. This may take the form of scratching walls or furniture, attacking objects, knocking objects from surfaces, climbing curtains etc. Or your cat may display aggressive behaviour towards you or other family members (if your cat or your family are at risk of injury contact a veterinary behaviourist or force-free trainer immediately).

A first step is to move delicate objects somewhere safe and cover any items the cat has been attacking. Next, focus on what is causing this behaviour. In many cases, this will be frustration or boredom which may be from being inside. Make sure there are plenty of interesting things around the house. Go back to Step 1 and look through the check list to make sure the house is set up to keep your cat happy. And watch to check that your

cat likes the objects you have selected for them. If everything is set up well, try introducing some new, exciting toys, increase the amount of time you set aside to play or train, or consider investing in an enclosed cat run. If destructive behaviour persists or if it gets to a point where you feel you or your cat may be injured, seek help from a veterinary behaviourist or force-free trainer.

## **Observing cat behaviour**

Observe your cat for signs of how they are adjusting to life at home. If you notice any negative signs, refer to the checklist from Step 1 to ensure all needs are being met. If their needs are met and your cat is experiencing more serious symptoms such as vomiting or urinating outside of the litter tray, seek veterinary advice.

# MEOW

## Some signs your cat is adjusting well

- Eating, drinking, toileting and sleeping as normal.
- Playing or kneading regularly.
- Interacting with you, your family and other animals as usual.
- Using all or most of the rooms in the house.  
A stressed cat will often hide in one room or not want to move around much. So, if your cat is moving around, they are comfortable in the space.

## Some signs of stress to look out for

- Over-grooming.
- Vomiting or diarrhoea.
- Straining to urinate or defecate, or toileting outside the litter tray, on furniture or clothing.
- Reduction in appetite.
- Hiding more.
- Less tolerant of being touched or approached.
- Consult your vet immediately if you see these signs in your cat.



## Keeping your **new kitten home**

An easy way to have a happy home cat is to adopt a kitten and keep them home from the start. Kittens that are brought up indoors usually adjust well to a home life because they have never known anything else.

Ideally, cats should have indoor and outdoor access to a safe, pleasant spot in your yard where they can't escape your property. If this isn't possible for you, you can still give your kitten a great start to help them be happy and healthy indoors, but it's important to set up your house in a way that accommodates their needs. The following information and tips will help you create a safe and stimulating environment for your new kitten.



### **Set up checklist**

Prepare for your new kitten with our set up checklist on **page 9**

## Settling In

Your new kitten may be as brave as a lion and instantly want to start exploring your whole house, but for many kittens coming into a new home can be overwhelming, especially if there are other animals living there. To help your kitten build confidence in their new space it's best to start by keeping them to a single room that is set up with everything they need.

As they feel more comfortable (good signs include eating and drinking well and using the litter tray without accident) you can begin to gradually open up the rest of the house to them. Let them wander as far as they like, letting them sniff and explore. When they get tired or if they seem overwhelmed, take them back to their room.



## Two's company

Cats are social animals, although each individual cat varies in how sociable they'll want to be with other cats, animals and humans. If adopted together as kittens, cats can form incredibly strong, lifelong bonds with each other. It may be harder, but it's not impossible, to introduce two adult cats to each other, or bring in a new cat when your cat is used to living alone. To increase the chance of having a pair who are likely to get along, you could adopt two siblings, or a mother and her kitten together.

Having two cats means they both have company while you are out and provides more opportunities to play, be active and stimulated. It also means more cat cuddles and a little less work for you, as they can keep each other busy.

**Follow the advice in 1 | Getting started'**

To help your kitten adapt to staying indoors on **pages 4-9**

## How to keep a **new cat home**

So, you've just adopted an adult cat and you're hoping to keep them at home. Great!

Ideally, cats should have indoor and outdoor access to a safe, pleasant spot in your yard where they can't escape your property. When this isn't possible, the following information and tips will help you create a safe and stimulating indoor environment for your new cat.



### **Big changes**

When you adopt an adult cat you might not know much about them or their background. So it's best to keep changes to a minimum and go slow. Ask the previous owner or shelter for any information about how the cat has been living up until now and use this information as your starting point.

When moving a cat from one house to another, always keep them indoors for at least two weeks while they adjust. The best way to make your cat an indoor cat is to keep them inside at all times. However, mistakes happen, like a door is left open, or your cat finds a hole in a window you didn't know was there and suddenly your cat is outside again. First, try to fix the problem and keep them inside but if you are struggling to contain them, our Roam to Home four-week plan can help them with the adjustment.

## Settling In

Your new cat may be as brave as a lion and instantly want to start exploring your whole house, but for many cats, coming into a new home can be overwhelming, especially if there are other animals living there. To help your cat build confidence in their new space it's best to start by keeping them to a single room that is set up with everything they need. As they feel more comfortable (good signs include eating and drinking well and using the litter tray without accident) you can begin to gradually open up the rest of the house to them.

Let them wander as far as they like, letting them sniff and explore. When they get tired or if they seem overwhelmed, take them back to their room.



**Follow the advice in '1 | Getting started'**

To help your cat adapt to staying indoors on **pages 4-9**



Your success will depend on your effort and patience, but also your cat. Some cats will struggle to adapt. If that's your cat and the trouble-shooting tips don't help, remember any reduction in roaming is worthwhile.



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