

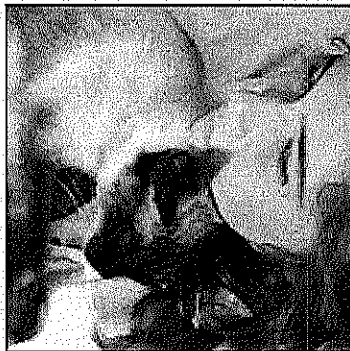
# 5 Tips for Caring for Your New Cat

## Isolation Room

To ease your cat's entry into your new home, set up a special "isolation" room for him to inhabit for the first few days. This room is especially important for a kitten or a timid or frightened adult; they only have to get used to one small area at first. Set up the isolation room with food and water bowls, a cozy bed, litter box, scratching post and a few toys. Place the litter box away from the food bowl. Understandably, cats do not like to eat right next to their toilet. If you have a kitten, put the box about 6 feet from the bowl, closer if he's less than 14 weeks old. Kittens sometimes forget where the box is or may not be able to reach it in time if it's too far away.

If you can't create an isolation room, at least block off any areas with potentially dangerous hiding places, such as the basement. And make sure your house is fully cat-proofed. If possible, isolate the cat in the room where the litter box will be kept permanently so the kitten or cat won't be thrown off when the box is moved.

Before long the cat will begin to show an interest in what's on the other side of the door from the "isolation" room. Once he is eating well, using the litter box and no longer hiding, let him out of the room to investigate the rest of the house. To make this step as stress-free as possible for the cat, the house must be tranquil. If you have children too young to understand that they must be quiet and not interfere with the cat while he prowls around, arrange for them to be out of the house or in bed for the evening.



## Feeding Your New Cat

You'll probably be amazed by the range of cat foods available; there are different types for different life stages as well as brands that vary in quality and price. Ideally you should continue feeding the cat whatever food he is accustomed to. If it is of low quality, however, you may want to gradually introduce a better food. Your vet will offer advice. Buy only a small quantity to start with; or even better, ask if the store or your vet offers free samples.

Food bowls may be made of plastic, metal, ceramic or glass. The disadvantage of plastic is that the bowls may become scratched, creating a breeding ground for bacteria. Even when they are washed frequently, the bacteria often remains on the bowls' surfaces. It's best to have a separate water bowl, again preferably not made of plastic. Wash the food bowl after each meal and keep fresh water available at all times.

## Litter and Litter Box Location

Think about where you will be placing your new cat's litter box: Location may affect its size and shape. Although there are many new and fancy boxes on the market, there's nothing wrong with the standard open pan. If you're concerned about odors and litter being scattered by an enthusiastic digger, a covered box is a possibility, although these raise some health concerns, especially if you are using a litter that is dusty. No matter what kind of box you use, some litter will always be tracked out of the box. A mat can minimize tracking around the room. The ideal place for a litter box is in a quiet area, off limits to children or your dog. Your cat will want to go about his "business" undisturbed.

The choice of litters is even more confounding. Purchase a small bag initially, in case it takes some experimentation to find the type your cat prefers. A sturdy scoop completes your feline toilet kit.