



Cat Adoption Talking Points

for Fosters and Volunteers

Our goal is to ensure a good match for both the animal and their new family to set everyone up for a successful life together. While our staff will connect with adoption applicants to provide resources and counseling that may cover everything in this document, it helps adopters to hear it from as many folks as possible, so feel free to reiterate any of these points with them!

The main reason an adoption “sticks” is because the adopted animal is a great match for their adopted home! As a foster parent, you know your foster best. It is crucial that you are giving an accurate description to potential adopters to set their expectations and reduce the risk of return.

Below are great tips to talk about prior to finalizing the adoption. If you'd like more info about any of these points, check out our Pet Care Info page at phillypaws.org/pet-care-info.

About the Adopter: *Finding an ideal match!*

- Chat about the reasons for wanting to adopt and what drew them to this animal!
- What is the home environment like (calm or busy)?
- How many adults, children, and other pets in the home or visit frequently?
- How long would the pet be alone each day and what is the daily routine like?
- Do they have any upcoming moves, travel, or schedule changes?

Tip: If you are noticing that many people are reaching out to you who are not a good match for your foster pet, you can update your foster pet's adoption bio! The most accurate info we can provide on their profile, that still has a positive and welcoming tone, the more likely good matches will come your way! As always, reach out to foster@phillypaws.org with questions!

Adjustment Period: *Plan for bringing home a new pet!*

- To set everyone up for success, adopters can create a “safe space” in an enclosed room with the new cat's bedding, litter, food, water, and toys!
- They should be prepared to keep them in the “safe space” and separate from other animals for about two weeks to reduce stress and potential disease transmission, as well as allow time to decompress, and slowly warm up!
- This also helps monitor appetite, drinking, urination, defecation, energy level, and health.

Medical History & Future Vet Care: *Keeping the cat healthy!*

- Review current medical records, medical waivers, needs, medications, and general history.
- **FelV/FIV Testing:** Cats are not routinely tested and we recommend testing at least 60 days post last exposure, testing prior to introducing to other cats, and consulting with a vet.
- Confirm the adopter feels comfortable with their needs
- They should monitor for signs of illness & be prepared to treat if needed including ocular/nasal discharge, coughing, lethargy, loss of appetite, diarrhea, vomiting, etc.
- If recently spayed/neutered, they should monitor the surgery site for inflammation/infection
- Recommendations:
 - establishing a relationship with a full-service vet and identifying an ER vet
 - a wellness visit in 3-4 weeks or sooner if showing any signs of illness
 - routine flea treatment - using a safe brand and avoiding flea collars
 - annual checkups for vaccines and overall health checks.

Behaviors, Exercise, Enrichment, & Diet: *Keeping the cat happy!*

- **Routine:** What does a typical day look like?
- **Handling:** Comfort with being touched, pet, or held. What do they like (or not)?
- **Comfort with kids:** Monitor interactions!
- **(In)dependence:** From completely independent to completely dependent, where does your foster animal fall? How much contact with people and animals do they prefer?
- **Favorites:** What do they enjoy most? Favorite toys? Most endearing habits?
- **Adjustment:** What to expect in the first few days and weeks. Did they hide?
- **Ability to handle changes:** to routine, visitors, loud noises, etc.
- **Challenges:** Things they're working on and things to be prepared to manage
- **Litter box:** Start with a small space to ensure they know where their box is as they adjust. *Not using the box?* Change the pan size, type of litter, and/or location. Uncover the box, avoid scented litter, and provide one box per cat + one extra
- **Current diet:** Change diet slowly. Feed a healthy diet by avoiding "by-products", "meals" as top ingredients.
- **Carrier:** Make it less scary, by leaving it out in the home with the door open. Add a soft blanket, toys, treats, catnip, and even feed them in it to make it a positive, comfortable space for them.
- **Energy level** and playtime needs
- **Exercise & enrichment:** Keep their mind and body happy! Recommend 15 minutes twice a day of play. Offer wand toys, crinkle balls, stuffed mice, and tunnels. Ensure access to high places, cat towers, and windows. Use positive reinforcement clicker training to teach them things like high five!
- **Scratching:** A natural, healthy cat behavior that releases endorphins! Offer plenty of appropriate places to scratch like posts, boards, and towers. Use catnip, treats, and praise to encourage them. Declawing is an unnecessary surgery that is painful and causes issues like biting and house soiling
- **Trim nails** monthly and aim to make it a stress-free experience by using treats!
- **Two is better than one:** If the cat is alone for long hours or is becoming bored/destructive, consider adopting a second cat friend

Introducing Pets:

How to introduce a new pet to resident pets!

After the adjustment period, adopters can allow their new cat to explore the home without meeting other animals so they can become familiar and comfortable without being stressed.

If after the adjustment period, the pet is comfortable and healthy, they can start using slow introduction methods over the course of several days or weeks. These methods include feeding on either side of the door, cracking the door for sniffing, swapping bedding, and using treats for positive reinforcement.

Introductions should be done gradually and always monitored in a controlled environment.

For everyone's safety, **dogs** should be leashed during the introduction process! Baby gates are also great tools for introducing cats and dogs.

Safety Tips:

Important things to know!

Cat proof! Storing valuables, small objects, and yarn/string out of reach, checking for holes throughout the home, and keeping all doors/ windows securely screened or closed ensures the cat stays safe and secure in their new environment.

Collar & tags: A "Breakaway Collar" and an engraved tag with adopter's contact info and "Indoor Cat" is the best way to have their pet returned to them if lost.

Outdoor safety: If the cat is content indoors, stick with that! If they need more enrichment & exercise, adopters can consider harness training first before safely taking them outside.