



CUSTOMIZED MULTIPURPOSE PLAYPEN

TEN PROVEN SUCCESSFUL STEPS

FOR INTRODUCING A NEW CAT OR KITTEN TO YOUR HOUSEHOLD

Prepare a safe room or a playpen for the new arrival where they will stay for a minimum of 2-3 weeks before being introduced into their new home and family. Put a litter box, food and water and make a cozy, warm bed for them to sleep in. Toys are always good. If possible, bring bedding with their smells they have accumulated from their previous location. This will make them feel safer and also help with cross scenting for a better introduction to the other cats. A floor scratcher or scratching post is **A MUST** and a window for sunshine (**be sure all screens are secure**).

If you are using the playpen, when you first set it up, be sure it is covered completely, with just an opening in the front. As the cat feels more comfortable, you can open up a side at a time, but always leave the top covered. If there are other cats in the household, lifting the sides so they can smell and/or leaving one side completely uncovered. Use your judgment during this introduction. Even after the introduction seems to be successful, we recommend that the cat be put into the playpen or private room at nights until you are comfortable with the interaction and it gives them a safe space for adjustment.

1. Visit as much as possible every day. Groom and pet them often. Then pet the cats that you would like to introduce to your newcomer. **Cross scenting is an invaluable way of helping the cats get acquainted.** They will get to know each other through the door by putting their paws underneath and doing things that cats

do to become acquainted, or using the playpen, which is our recommendation for introduction.

2. **Exchange food bowls and water dishes.** Give the same amount of attention to the cats in the household that you give to the newcomer. Everyone should feel loved and secure with a stranger in their midst. Having good quality and delicious food will also help with the transition.
3. If you have a screen or some type of transparent barrier you can put up temporarily between doors, this will definitely help. Then you can open the door and they can also see one another and a good way to introduce newcomers. **If using the two level playpen (which can be ordered online) it is excellent for this situation. The playpen should be covered on three sides and the top with a cardboard box inside and a bed on top of it or a carrier.** We customize the playpens, creating a fleece bed on top of a sturdy cardboard box, on its side. The litter box can be slid into the opening of the cardboard box, leaving more room on the bottom of the playpen for food and water. You can also connect the shelves in the upper portion with a hammock or Bunge cords for extra bedding.
4. If you are taming a feral cat or an older kitten, the length of time in the separate room or playpen will depend upon the progress made. When the cat is let out of the playpen, be sure it is in a confined space. Give the cat time and under most circumstances they will become and grateful friends.
5. When you are ready to let your new cat/kitten into the household to interact with the other cats **(you must be present), the best time is after everyone has eaten and preferably when they would normally take their naps.** They will be more relaxed. Stay with the cats and watch over them carefully for the first 24-48 hours. Keep all of the newcomer's things in their room or playpen until the transition is complete. At night we put them back into the room (or playpen) as their familiar safe haven. Go at a slow comfortable pace. **There is no hurry, as this is a permanent home for the newcomer and they will be there for their lifetime.**
6. GOING THROUGH ALL OF THE PROCESSES SLOWLY AND WITH EASE WILL RESULT IN A HAPPY AND WELL-ADJUSTED HOUSEHOLD. **NEVER BRING A NEW CAT OR KITTEN INTO A HOUSEHOLD AND LET THEM LOOSE WHEN THEY ARRIVE.** This type of introduction will not be successful and the cat and/or kitten will probably find a hiding place and be difficult to remove. Cats are creatures of familiarity. **INTRODUCTION MUST BE SLOW AND EASY.**
7. CATS ARE VERY SENSITIVE TO CHANGE AND NEED TO BE FAMILIAR WITH THE HOUSE, ITS SMELLS, WHERE THE LITTER BOX IS, WHERE THE FOOD IS AND MOST OF ALL THE OTHER ANIMALS AND PEOPLE IN THE HOUSEHOLD UNTIL THEY FEEL COMFORTABLE.

8. When they are first out in the household WITH OTHER CATS, there may be some hissing or growling or running and hiding from one another. It is their way of communicating a complicated language that we do not understand. It has been our personal experience that if the introduction is done properly, you will have wonderful satisfying results and the cats will live together in harmony. OF COURSE ALL OF THE CATS IN THE HOUSEHOLD MUST BE SPAYED OR NEUTERED, vaccinated and treated for fleas which can be brought into the household on shoes and clothing.
9. Food is always a good tension breaker. Keep something everyone likes, as this can have a calming effect. There are also Bach Flower Remedies like Rescue Remedy, which we use in rescue circumstances to help relieve the stress.

ONE LAST PRECAUTION: SINCE THE CAT OR KITTEN WILL BE INDOORS ONLY, WATCH THE DOORS TO THE OUTSIDE. IF A CAT OR KITTEN ESCAPES INTO A NEW AND THREATENING TERRITORY, YOU MAY NEVER SEE THEM AGAIN AS THEY WILL BOLT AND HIDE OR WORSE! If you have an adventurous cat, keep a spray bottle with water by the door and use it when leaving and entering the house.

If a cat does escape, there are immediate precautions that must be taken. We recommend setting a trap or two, close to home, with familiar smells, putting up a flyer and going from door to door in the near vicinity with a photo of the cat and walk around the area calling the cat putting treats along the path. They usually stay pretty close to home the first 2-3 days and this is your window of opportunity to trap them. For additional information, contact us at feralcatcenter@aol.com.

The most domesticated cat, once outside, in unfamiliar territory will be frightened and most likely will not come to you when you call. Don't count on this happening and set your trap right away!

Go to www.feralcatcaetakers.org under Caretaking and read the document Adopting a Feral Cat.