



CAT FOSTER CARE GUIDE



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CONTENT

SECTION I : INTRODUCTION	4
- Frequently Asked Questions	4-6
SECTION II: PREPARING FOR YOUR FOSTER CAT	6
- Supplies You'll Need	7
- Cat-Proofing Your Home	7
SECTION III: BRINGING HOME YOUR FOSTER CAT	8
- Choosing Your Foster Cat	8
- Cat Introductions	8
- Dog Introductions	9
- Children & Cats	9
SECTION IV: DAILY CARE	9
- Feeding	9
- Litter Box Habit	10
- Grooming	10
- Mental Stimulations & Exercise	10
- Safety Requirements	10
SECTION V: EMERGENCY & MEDICAL SUPPORTS	11
- Veterinary Care	11
- Sign of Illnesses and What to do Next	11-13
- Sneezing & Nasal Discharge	11
- Eye discharge	12
- Loss of Appetite	12
- Lethargy	12
- Vomiting	12
- Pain or Strain While Urinating	12
- Diarrhea	12
- Frequent Ear Scratching	13



- Swollen, Irritated Ears	13
- Hair Loss	13
- Dehydration	13
- Criteria for Emergencies	13

SECTION VI: BEHAVIOUR SUPPORTS 14

- Rough Play	14
- Litter Box Accident	14
- Scratching on Inappropriate Surfaces	14

SECTION VII: CAT BODY LANGUAGES 14

- Relaxed or Curious Body Language	15
- Undecided or Nervous Body Language	15
- Scared or Fearful Body Language	15

SECTION VIII SHY AND TIMID CATS 15

- Preparations	16-17
- About The Cage	16
- Setting Up The Cage	16
- Tools You May Need	16
- Treats	16
- Leather Garden Gloves	16
- Pheromones	17
- The Lesson	17-22
- Motivating the Cat with Food	17
- Petting with the Wand	18
- Petting with the Brush Wand	18
- Petting with a Wand and Glove/Hand	19
- Petting with Glove/Hand	20
- Picking a Cat in the Cage	20
- Taking a Cat Out of the Cage	21
- Spending Time in the Playroom	22
- Spending Time in a Real-Life-Room	22

Why we start a fostering program?

SPCA Selangor receives many surrendered and rescued cats and kittens and sometimes those animals are in bad conditions or too young to be in an animal shelter that has many other animals which have a possibility of carrying diseases.

Because we have almost a hundred cats in SPCA Selangor, we can't focus on the special needs these cats require. That is why we need volunteers who can open their hearts and homes to accept and foster these cats. Through this programme, the animals will get the proper attention and nursing until they're strong, healthy, and old enough to stay in SPCA Selangor until they get adopted.

What can you do to help?

All you need to do is open your home to these cats and provide:

- A healthy and safe environment for the foster cats
- Medical fund
- Transportation to and from the SPCA Selangor and ALL vet appointments **AS NEEDED**
- Socialization and cuddle time to help teach the cats about positive family and pet relationships
- Lots of exercise and positive stimulation to help them develop into great cats

Frequently Asked Questions

How much time do I need to spend with a foster cat?

- The amount of time will vary depending on the energy level and needs of the cat you are fostering.
- It is ideal to spend around two hours a day socializing and playing with your foster cat.

Can I foster cats even if I have a full-time job?

- Yes, the foster coordinator will match you with an appropriate cat.
- You would then just need to provide care to the cat before and after your workday.

Can I foster a cat if I don't have a fenced yard?

- Yes. We require that all foster cats be kept **INDOORS** for the duration of their stay in foster homes, so a fenced yard is **IRRELEVANT**.



How long will the cat need to be in foster care?

- It varies, Foster homes are generally needed for cats with medical or behavioral issues that are best resolved in a home setting.
- But usually, the duration will be at least 2 weeks to 2 months.

How often does my foster cat need to go to the SPCA Selangor?

- Foster cats should only need to come to SPCA Selangor for ALL scheduled vaccinations, deworms and neuter/spay before they can be brought back for adoption.

When is my foster cat ready for adoption?

- When a foster cat has been cleared for adoption by the veterinarian, a time will be scheduled for you to return the cat to SPCA Selangor.

Will I need to give medicine to my foster cat?

- Many illnesses have incubation periods, meaning symptoms can arise after you take a cat home.
- If your foster cat needs medications, we can show you how to administer them before you take the animal home.

Can I let my foster cat play with my personal pets?

- We advise that you CONSULT with your veterinarian before fostering to ensure that all of your personal pets are FRIENDLY to other cats, HEALTHY and up-to-date on ALL vaccines.
- If, for any reason, your personal pet becomes ill while you are fostering a SPCA Selangor pet, we cannot provide medical care for your personal pet or be held responsible.
- All foster cats should be quarantined for at least 2 weeks before being mixed with personal pets

Important note: If your personal cat is allowed outdoors, it cannot interact with your foster cat. Foster cats are typically more at risk of getting ill and we want to limit that risk by not exposing them to anything from the outdoors.



What if I want to adopt my foster cat?

- You will need to complete an adoption application and follow the full adoption process.
- If you've already returned the cat to the SPCA Selangor, please contact the foster coordinator right away.

What if I know someone who's interested in adopting my foster cat?

- If someone you know is interested in adopting the cat, please contact the foster coordinator as soon as possible to arrange a meeting/interview.
- **ALL ADOPTION PROCEDURES SHOULD BE DONE BY SPCA SELANGOR IN SPCA SELANGOR.**

Who will take care of my foster cat if I need to go out of town?

- Make sure you don't have a holiday planned while you're fostering SPCA Selangor cat.
- If you do need to leave your foster cat for a period amount of time, you'll need to return them to SPCA Selangor and we'll find another fosterer to take care of the cat.
- Do inform us a week before you return the cat to SPCA Selangor so proper arrangement can be made.

What if my foster cat is not working out?

- If you have any issue caring for our foster cats, do call us for advice and guides.

SECTION II: PREPARING FOR YOUR FOSTER CAT

Space

- Prepare a special area for the foster cat to help ease its adjustment into a new home environment.
- It is better to confine the foster cat to a small room, at first, to let it adjust before giving the cat free rein in your home.
- Equip the room with food and water dishes and a litter box, scratching post and a space to hide.
- It is especially important to give your foster cat a space of its own where it can stay while getting used to all the new sounds and smells.



Supplies You'll Need

You can get the relationship off to a great start – and ease the nerves of both human and furball! – by **making sure that you have everything your cat will need.**

- **A bowl for dry food and one for water:** **Stainless steel or ceramic** work best.
- **A supply of dry cat food:** All cats are fed dry food unless a special diet is needed. Make sure **the foods met all the nutrients your cat need.**
- **A soft place to sleep:** Old towels or blankets work well if you don't have a cat bed.
- **Litter box:** Make sure the box is an **appropriate size** for the cat.
- **Litter:** Please **use clumping litter**, unless you're given other instructions.
- **Scratching posts** or trays: Try different types to see which the cat prefers.
- **Cat treats:** Giving treats is a good way **to help train and build a positive relationship** with your cat.
- **Cat toys:** Make sure the **toys are durable and safe** (without bits that will be harmful if swallowed).
- **Grooming supplies:** A well-groomed and clean cat will **reduce the risk of getting sick**
- **Collar:** Should **have either 'break away' or 'snap away' feature.** Should **have identification tag** if your cat escaped.
- **Carrier:** **Well ventilated and sturdy. Never underestimate your cat's abilities.**

Cat-Proofing Your Home

Here are some additional tips for cat-proofing your home:

- Make sure that all **trash cans are covered** or latched and keep them inside a closet.
- Keep the **toilet lids closed.**
- **Keep** both people and pet **food out of reach** and off all counter tops.
- **Move house plants out of reach.** **Many house plants are toxic to cats** and they like to chew on them.
- Make sure **aquariums or cages that house small animals**, like hamsters or fish, **are securely out of reach** of your cat.
- **Remove medications**, lotions or cosmetics from any accessible surfaces.
- **Move and secure all electrical and phone wires** out of reach. Cats may chew on or get tangled in them.
- **Pick up any clothing items that have buttons or strings**, which can be harmful to your cat if consumed.



SECTION III: BRINGING HOME YOUR FOSTER CAT

Taking care of a foster cat requires a commitment from you to make sure the cat is happy and healthy.

Choosing a Foster Cat

- When you and the foster coordinator have decided on a foster cat, an appointment will be scheduled so you can pick up the cat at SPCA Selangor.
- If the foster cat is on medications, the foster coordinator can show you how to administer them.
- **Be honest:** If you aren't comfortable with anything about the animal you may be fostering, please tell the foster coordinator before you take the animal home.

Please note: If for any reason you are unable to keep your foster cat, please notify the foster coordinator right away. We may not be able to remove the cat immediately because we may not have space for the cat, so we ask for your patience and understanding.

Cat Introductions

- Before bringing your foster cat home, create a separate "territory" for the foster cat.
- This area should be equipped with food, water, a scratching post, a litter box, access to natural sunlight, and comfortable resting places. Your other cats should have their own separate territory.
- Over one- to two-week period, let the cats smell each other through a closed door. Exchanging blankets or towels between the areas will help them get used to each other's smells.
- The next step is to allow them to see each other through a baby gate or a door that is propped open two inches. If the cats are interested in each other and seem comfortable, allow them to meet.
- Open the door to the rooms between the cats and observe them closely. If any cat shows signs of significant stress or aggression, separate them and introduce them more slowly again.

It's a good idea to have a broom or squirt bottle on hand to deter any fights. **Never** try to separate cats who are fighting with your hands or body parts.



Dog Introductions

- Start keeping them separated first, equip your foster cat's area with food, water, scratching post, litter box, and resting places.
- Over one-to-two-week period, let the dog and cat smell each other. Exchanging blanket and towels between areas will help them get used to each other's smells.
- After a week or two, do the face to face introduction. Keeping your dog a leash, allow your foster cat to roam in the space.
- Don't continue the interaction if either pet becomes over stimulated or aggressive.
- **Never leave your dog unsupervised around the foster cat.**

Children & Cats

- Please teach your children how to act responsibly and respectfully around your foster cat.
- You should still supervise all interactions between children and your foster cat.
- **Key things to remind your children:**
 - Always leave the foster cat alone when it is eating or sleeping.
 - Do not tease or rile up the foster cat.
 - Don't chase the foster cat around the house.
 - Pick up the foster cat only when an adult is there to help.
 - Be careful when opening and closing doors so as to not accidentally let the foster cat outside.

SECTION IV: DAILY CARE

Foster parents need to be responsible and make sure the foster cat's welfares are cared. All their needs are administered provide medical support and commit to a cat that has illnesses .

Feeding

- All foster cats should be fed a diet of dry cat food, unless otherwise specified by the vet.
- We use a mixture of ProDiet and Royal Canin cat food and ask that you use the same or a food of similar or better quality.
- Feed your foster cat once or twice daily; the amount will be based on the age and weight of your foster cat. Make sure the cat always has access to fresh, clean water.

Keep in mind that some human food and house plants (which cats like to chew on) are poisonous to cats, so remove any plants or food from areas that your foster cat can access.



Litter Box Habits

- If you **have other cats**, there should be **one litter box for each cat in the house, plus one extra**.
- The litter boxes should be **placed in quiet, low-traffic spots** so that the cats aren't startled while using it.
- **Scoop out each litter box at least once daily, and completely clean it every two weeks.**
- Keep in mind that a cat **may miss the litter box** if it **has a medical issue** like diarrhea or it may avoid the box if it has a **urinary tract infection**, which causes pain when urinating.

If your foster cat has an accident, don't discipline or punish the cat. It will only teach the cat to fear and mistrust you.

Grooming

- A **clean and well-groomed cat** has a better chance of getting adopted, so **brush your foster cat regularly, especially if it has long hair.**
- You can **trim its nails**. But **please be careful** because you **can cause pain and bleeding if you trim the nails too short.**

Cats don't generally like being bathed, so please don't give your foster cat any baths.

Mental Stimulations & Exercise

- Because play time **provides stimulation, encourages socialization and releases excess energy**, provide your foster cat with **at least one or two play sessions per day.**
- **Try a variety of toys** (balls, squeaky toys, feather toys, etc.) to see which ones your foster cat prefers.
- **Discourage your foster cat from play-biting** your hands and feet. This is something that adopters may not find desirable

Safety Requirements

- **Foster cats must live indoors.** If your foster cat seems very curious about going outside or is constantly at the door waiting for the right moment, please take extra precautions.
- **Remember, if your personal cat has access to the outdoors, he or she cannot interact with your foster cat. You'll need to keep their living quarters separate.**
- Please **do not let your foster cat ride loose in a car. Use a carrier at all times to transport your foster cat to and from appointments**



SECTION V: MEDICAL & EMERGENCY SUPPORT

- You are responsible for ALL scheduled appointments for your cat's vaccines and neutering/spay appointment.
- If you are fostering a cat who is on medications, please make sure that the cat gets all prescribed doses.
- **Do not** end medication early for any reason without consulting a vet.
- **SHOULD BE BROUGHT IN FOR VACCINES AND BE NEUTERED BEFORE CAT CAN BE BROUGHT BACK INTO SPCA SELANGOR FOR ADOPTION**

Veterinary Care

- The foster parents still need to bring the foster cat to their scheduled vaccinations and neutering **EVEN IF THE CAT IS SICK.**
- The vet will give a quick checkup and schedule a new date for the cat.
- Do inform, foster parents will need to bear the foster cats' medical bills (except vaccinations, deworms and neutering) while they're under the foster care.
- The fosterers need to inform foster coordinator if the foster cat develops a serious disease/viral infection.
- **SPCA Selangor will evaluate and have the rights to ask the fosterers to return the foster cat to SPCA Selangor if we find the prognosis is poor.**

Signs of Illness and What to do Next

It's a good idea to keep track of these levels in a journal. You'll also want to record any of the following symptoms, which could be signs of illness.

Sneezing and nasal discharge.

- Sneezing can be common if a cat is recovering from an upper respiratory infection.
- If the discharge is clear, the infection is probably viral and medication may not be necessary.
- You can try nebulizing the cat to relieve its discomfort.
- If there is colored discharge, consult a vet because the cat may have a bacterial infection.
- If the cat starts to breathe with an open mouth or wheeze, bring them to the vet.



Eye discharge.

- A yellow or green discharge
- Swelling around the eyes,
- If the third eyelid is showing, you need to consult a vet.

Loss of appetite.

- Your cat may be stressed after arriving at your home, and stress can cause lack of appetite.
- If the cat hasn't eaten after 24 hours, please consult the vet.
- If the cat has been eating well, but then stops eating for 12 to 24 hours, consult the vet.
- Please **do not** change the cat's diet without consulting a vet. An abrupt change in diet can cause diarrhea.

Lethargy.

- The activity level of your cat will vary depending on age and personality
- If the cat cannot rise or seems weak and unable to stand, bring them to the vet.

Vomiting.

- Sometimes cats will vomit up a thick tubular hairball with bile or other liquids. This is normal.
- Don't worry about one or two vomiting episodes as long as the cat is acting normally otherwise: eating, active, no diarrhea.
- Vomiting food (undigested/ partially digested) please consult a vet

Pain or strain while urinating.

- When a cat first goes into a new home, it may not urinate due to stress. If the cat hasn't urinated in more than 24 hours, however, please consult a vet.
- If you notice the cat straining to urinate with little or no results, or crying out when urinating, please consult the vet.

Diarrhea.

- Monitor your cat's pooping habits daily. Soft stool is normal for the first two or three days after taking a cat home.
- If your cat has liquid stools, however, please consult a vet to ensure that the cat doesn't need medications.
- If your cat has bloody, foul smelling or mucoid diarrhea, please consult the vet.

Frequent ear scratching.

- Your cat may have [ear mites](#) if it [scratches its ears often](#) or [shakes its head frequently](#).
- If there is a [dark discharge](#) that resembles [ground coffee](#) when you look in her ears, [please consult the vet](#).

Swollen, irritated ears.

- If your cat has [irritated, swollen or red or pink ears](#) that [smell like yeast](#), it may have an [ear infection](#) called [otitis](#), [please consult the vet](#)

Hair loss.

- It is [normal for cats](#) to have [thin fur around the lips, eyelids and in front of the ears](#).
- [Clumpy patches of hair loss or thinning hair](#) can indicate [ringworm or dermatitis](#).
- It is important to [check your cat's coat every day](#)

Dehydration.

- [Gently pinch the cat's skin](#) around its [neck area](#). If the [skin stays taut](#), the cat is [dehydrated](#). [Please consult a vet](#).

Criteria for Emergencies

Here are some [specific symptoms](#) that could [indicate an emergency](#):

- [Not breathing or labored breathing](#)
- Signs of [extreme dehydration](#): dry gums, weakness, vomiting, not urinating, skin tenting (when the skin is pulled up, it stays there)
- [Abnormal lethargy or unable to stand](#)
- [Unconsciousness](#) or unable to wake up
- [Cold to the touch](#)
- [Broken bones](#)
- Any [trauma](#): hit by a car, dropped, stepped on
- A [large wound or profuse bleeding](#) that doesn't stop when pressure is applied
- [Loss of appetite](#) for more than 24 hours

SECTION VI: BEHAVIOUR SUPPORT

- **We ask that you help your foster cat to develop good habits and skills through the use of positive reinforcement.**
- The basic idea is to reward desirable behaviors and ignore unwanted behaviors.
- **You must not punish a cat for a behavior that you find undesirable because punishment is ineffective at eliminating the behavior.**
- We will only place cats with behavioral issues with a person who feels comfortable working with the cat on his/her particular issues.
- We will provide that person with all the necessary information so that proper care and training can be given to the foster cat.

Rough Play.

- If you try to pet your foster cat, but the cat ends up giving you playful bite, remove your hand.
- **DO NOT** play with your cat using bare hand. Use toys instead. Teach them that toys are for playing and hands are for petting and rubbing.

Litter Box Accident.

- If your foster cat is not doing its business in the litter box, you might need to put a few more litter boxes until you're positive about the places the cat prefer.
- Or, you can confine the cat in the area you want it to do its business at for several days.

Scratching on Inappropriate Surfaces.

- If your foster cat starts scratching unwanted surfaces, make sure its actual scratching post is still in good condition and not worn out.
- You can experiment what type of scratcher your foster cat prefers, cardboard, carpet, sisal rope or box.

SECTION VII: BODY LANGUAGES

In order to help avoid stress and conflict, it is important that you learn to listen to your cat. It's best to look at multiple signals to help assess how your cat is feeling. Once you know what to watch for, you'll find your cat is almost constantly speaking to you.



Relaxed or curious body language:

- Cat returns your blink
- Whiskers forward
- Both ears up
- Smelling
- Tucks front paws under body
- Lying down or sitting in a relaxed posture
- Grooming
- Purring
- Kneading
- Soliciting attention
- Rubbing head against hand or object

Undecided or nervous body language:

- One ear up and one ear back
- Licking lips
- Ears up with stiff body
- Hissing
- Looking away
- Lying firmly against the back of the cage

Scared or fearful body language:

- Wide-eyed stare
- Ears down
- Whiskers back
- Hissing
- Growling
- Biting
- Holding a front paw up
- Standing with weight on one front paw
- Striking
- Head and body stiff

SECTION VIII: SHY AND TIMID CATS

- Cats can bite, scratch and attack handlers, causing bodily injury to those using these techniques.
- Safety equipment, including gloves, safety glasses, and protective clothing, is highly recommended while using these techniques.
- **SPCA Selangor is not responsible for any injuries to anyone using these techniques.**



About the cage

- Limiting the cat's space is necessary to allow interaction with the cat and to help the cat learn new skills.
- **If you don't limit the cat's space, it will avoid interaction.**
- The cage will be the cat's bedroom until it's no longer fearful around people and has completed the socialization training process.
- A cage that is 2 feet deep, 20 inches wide, 20 inches tall will be great and easy for you to interact with the cat.
- The cage shouldn't be smaller than the measurements above, because the cat needs to be able to get up, stretch and move around a bit.
- You'll want to use a wire cage that's open on all sides. If you're working with a cat who's particularly fearful, you could cover one side, but don't cover the whole thing to allow the cat to hide.

Setting up the cage

- Put some bedding toward the back of the cage. The bedding should be something soft but flat, so the cat doesn't hide under it.
- The litter tray should be in the front of the cage by the door, giving the cat the feeling that the back of the cage is a safe place.
- The water and food dishes should be attached to the sides of the cage.
- **If the cat is new to a cage, allow it at least a day to get comfortable in the cage before starting the lessons.**

Tools you may need

- **Feather wands.** Neutral colors seem to work best
- **Plastic wand.** Take a plastic wand and wrap one end in cloth, to create something that looks like a large Q-tip.
- **Long-handled brush.** You'll use the brush as a wand.

Treats.

- If the cat is food-motivated, treats like baby food, turkey deli meat and canned tuna work best.
- Always give the food-motivated cat a treat at the end of a session.
- The amount should be about a teaspoon of baby food or a few pieces of canned tuna or deli meat.

Leather garden gloves.

- To stay safe during the beginning steps, wear leather garden gloves.
- If the cat is big and strong, get welding gloves, but use them for as short a time as possible because cats are afraid of the size of the gloves.
- You should try to switch to the smaller leather gloves as soon as it is safe for you.



Pheromones.

- Pheromones, such as Feliway, are chemicals excreted by cats to mark their territory. In some cats, **pheromones may help to reduce stress and aggression.**
- You can **spray a bit on the tip of a wand** before you touch the cat with the wand

The Lesson

Please read through all the lessons and tips before starting the socialization process.

Lesson 1: Motivating the cat with food

- Offering **food can bring about positive interaction** from a very shy or aggressive cat, but keep in mind that **not all cats are motivated by food.**
- To find out if a cat is food-motivated, **place a small amount of baby food or deli meat on the end of a wand** (the end without the feathers or cloth).
- Slowly **move the food tip of the wand about halfway into the cage**, resting the wand just past the far edge of the cat box.
- If **not smelling or licking the food**, slowly move the wand toward the cat's nose.
- **You want the cat to lick** – not bite – the baby food or gently eat the deli meat.
- Even if the cat is food-motivated, **it may not want to accept any food from you in the beginning.**
- In that case, **go to step 2**, but **continue to offer the baby food or deli meat** on the wand at the beginning of each session.
- **Give the cat a treat every time you finish a session.** The cat will come to associate a positive outcome (a treat) with your interaction.
- In the beginning, before you've established trust, **the cat will most likely eat the treat after you have left the area.**

Tips

- Talk to the cat in a soothing voice while you are working with it. Use the cat's name often and let him know what you are going to do.
- Go slow. With each step, give the cat time to process what's happening and make good decisions.
- If the cat is food-motivated, always use lesson 1 a number of times to reinforce for the cat that it's time to socialize. In a short time, the cat will begin to look forward to the interaction.
- Watch the cat's reaction and body language. The cat will let you know what it's feeling. (See the list of body language signs above.)



Lesson 2: Petting with the wand

18

- Look for small positive signs at first: the cat smelling the wand; the cat tolerating touch on the head with the wand, even for a few seconds.

Here are the steps:

- Start with lesson 1 (food motivation) to help the cat make the transition to lesson 2.
- Let the cat smell the wand. If the cat attempts to bite the wand, stop moving the wand for a few seconds; if necessary, move the wand so the cat cannot bite it.
- If the cat continues to attempt to bite the wand, move it out of the cage. You don't want a confrontation with the cat. Go back into the cage with baby food on the wand and allow the cat to lick the baby food.
- Bring the wand back into the cage with the feather or cloth tip toward the cat. Let the cat smell the wand.
- Bring the wand up to the top of the cat's head and attempt to touch the cat lightly with the feather or cloth end of the wand. Starting at the top of the head between the ears (the forehead area), gently pet the cat.
- If the cat is receptive, work your way down the cat's back. Next, pet around the side of the cat's head and chin area.
- If the cat hisses or strikes, pull back a little, wait a few seconds and try again. Even if you only get to touch the top of the cat's head, that's progress. Next session, you may be able to pet the back of the cat's head.
- If the cat continues to react negatively, then go back to a previous action to which she reacted positively and end the session. Some cats are resistant in the beginning of a new lesson, so you may have to do this repeatedly.

Lesson 3: Petting with the brush wand

This lesson involves using a long-handled brush wand or something similar.

Here are the steps:

- Start with lesson 1 (food motivation) to help the cat make the transition to a new lesson.
- Take the brush wand and move it slowly into the cage. Watch the cat's reaction. Allow the cat to smell the brush.
- Bring the brush wand up to the top of the cat's head and attempt to lightly
- Starting at the top of the head between the ears (the forehead area), gently pet the cat.
- If the cat is receptive, work your way down its back. Next, pet around the side of her head and chin area.
- If the cat hisses or strikes, pull back a little, wait a few seconds and try again. If the cat continues to react negatively, then go back to a previous action to which she reacted positively and try again. Some cats are resistant in the beginning of a new lesson, so you may have to do this repeatedly.



Be patient!

You want to end each session positively, so give the cat a treat when you've finished a session. The treat can be a teaspoon of baby food or a few pieces of canned tuna or deli meat.

Lesson 4: Petting with the wand and a glove or hand

In the beginning sessions for this lesson, [you should wear a glove for protection](#). Use a wand that is rigid enough to give you protection while you're petting the cat.

Here are the steps:

- [Start with lesson 1](#) (food motivation) to help the cat make the transition to a new lesson.
- [Hold the wand with the hand that is on the same side as the cat's head](#). This is very, very important. If the cat's head is on your right, then the wand should be in your right hand.
- [Take the brush wand and move it slowly into the cage](#), just as you did in lesson 3. Watch the cat's reaction. Bring the brush wand up to the top of the cat's head and pet the cat with the wand.
- [Work your way down to the back of the cat's neck with the wand](#). Hold the wand across the back of the cat's neck with a little pressure. Now that the wand is in position, [you want the cat to see you slowly bringing your petting hand into the cage](#).
- [The cat may hiss](#), but continue moving your hand slowly into the cage and talking reassuringly to the cat.
- [Try to touch the back of the cat near the tail area first](#). If it hisses, stop moving your hand for a second, but then proceed to touch the back of the cat.
- The idea is to complete the movement of your hand, even if it is only to lightly touch the cat's back for a few seconds. [You want to help the cat decide that a touch from you will not hurt](#).
- [If the cat continues to react negatively, then go back to a previous action to which the cat reacted positively](#) and try again. If the situation becomes unsafe (the cat tries to bite or strikes), remove your hand and go back to petting with the wand only.

Lesson 5: Petting with a glove or hand

20

In this lesson, you'll progress to petting the cat with just a glove or hand, without the presence of the wand.

Here are the steps:

- Put baby food or deli meat on the tip of your gloved finger or your bare finger (whichever you feel more comfortable with) and move it slowly toward the cat. Stop when you reach the back of the litter box and rest your finger there with the food.
- Most of the time, the cat will come to you and begin licking the baby food or gently eating the meat. If that doesn't happen, slowly move your finger toward the cat's nose.. Entice the cat to eat by letting it smell the food.
- Once he's eaten, slowly reach high into the cage and with one finger touch the top of the cat's head. If it reacts favorably, continue to pet the back of the cat's head. If it looks like it might raise its head to bite, you can firmly push the cat's head forward and a little down.
- If the cat prefers to be touched on the back, start there and work your way toward the cat's head.
- If the cat reacts negatively at any point, go back to a spot where the cat reacted positively to your touch and try again.

As the cat becomes more comfortable with petting, you'll want to increase the amount of time spent on the petting session.

Lesson 6: Picking up a cat in the cage

This can be a scary step for the cat, so be prepared for the cat to react badly.

Here are the steps:

- Start this lesson by offering the cat food on your finger. Then, pet the cat.
- Next, scruff the cat and gently lift her front paws off the floor of the cage for a couple of seconds. (To scruff the cat, grasp the loose skin gently but firmly at the back of the neck above the shoulder blades.) Set the cat back down and pet it again. This would be considered one session. Do this for a number of sessions.
- If these sessions do not go well, the cat is not ready to be picked up and you need to build more trust with the cat. Go back to lesson 5 and work with the cat until it's comfortable with petting and more trusting of your actions.
- Then, repeat the scruffing sequence for as many sessions as it takes for the cat to become comfortable with it.
- Next, do the first two steps but, instead of just scruffing the cat, put one hand on top of the cat and slide your other hand under its belly. Try to lift the cat so that all four paws leave the cage floor. Do this for a few sessions until the cat is comfortable with it.



Lesson 7: Taking a cat out of the cage for lap time

Be prepared for some distress on the cat's part. In time, though, the cat will feel comfortable coming out of the cage, being held and being petted in your arms.

- Start a session by reaching in and petting the cat. Then, pick up the cat. If the cat panics, put the cat down, pet it and try again to remove the cat from the cage.
- If the cat struggles excessively, the cat not ready to be held. Go back to lesson 6. Don't get discouraged:

There are a couple of methods that you can use to remove the cat from the cage.

Method 1.

- Scruff the cat with one hand; place your other hand underneath the cat and hold its front paws together with your fingers so it doesn't grab onto the cage
- Lift the cat out of the cage, holding the cat's head up with the hand that's scruffing it, and set the cat on your lap. You can take the cat out of the cage either tail first or sideways.

Method 2.

- Scruff the cat, lifting its front paws off the floor. Slide your other hand between the front paws, supporting the cat's belly as you pick up the cat.
- Use this method only if the cat is relaxed and seems very comfortable with being picked up, and you have a very good hold on the cat.
- In each session, hold the cat on your lap and pet it. As the cat becomes more comfortable in your lap and starts to enjoy your touch, you can lengthen the lap time.
- When you put the cat back in the cage, you don't want the cat to jump out of your arms and into the cage.
- Instead, place the cat gently back in the cage. You don't want the cat to feel like it's escaping from you. And don't forget to give the cat its treat after each session.

Lesson 8: Spending time in the playroom

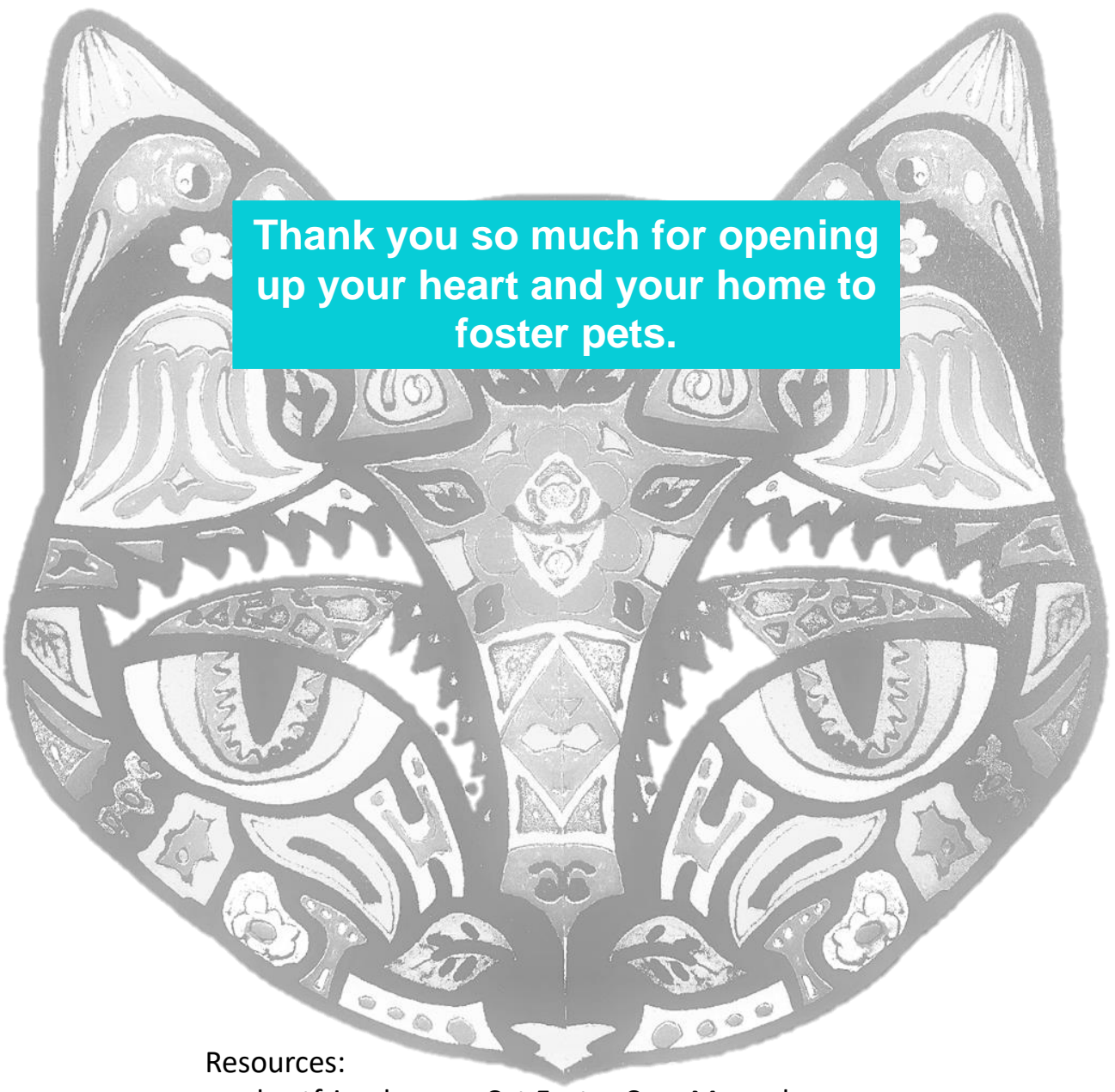
In the playroom, the cat will get to interact with a number of different people. The cat will also practice getting along with other cats and learning to play.

- Set up the playroom so that it has as few hiding places as possible. Cat trees need to be below your eye level and hiding spaces should be filled with towels. Provide some soft beds, some toys and some places for people to sit and pet the cats.
- As the cat becomes more relaxed in the playroom, have different people come in and interact with the cat to help it become comfortable with other humans besides its caregiver.
- Give the cat about an hour to settle down and explore. If, after an hour or so, the cat hasn't found a comfortable bed and runs when you approach, try to distract the cat with toys, food or another cat.
- If the cat cannot be distracted, give it some lap time in the playroom and then return the cat to the cage.
- The next step is supervised playroom time. Have some lap time with the cat in the playroom, and then place the cat in a cat bed next to you, continuing to pet the cat. Return the cat to the cage after this session.
- Repeat these sessions until the cat no longer runs from you. The goal is to give the cat many chances to make the decision not to run.

Lesson 9: Spending time in the real-life room

- The real-life room should be set up to mimic real life. You'll want to include people furniture and other items (e.g., TV, phone, computer) that a cat would encounter in a home.
- You'll want to minimize hiding places, but the real-life room should have a few hiding places so you can test the cat's confidence level.
- When the cat spends time in the real-life room, you're hoping that it'll approach you and solicit holding and petting.
- The real-life room also provides the cat with some new experiences it may not have had, such as the sound of a phone ringing or a radio playing. These sounds could be scary to a cat who has not lived in a home.





**Thank you so much for opening
up your heart and your home to
foster pets.**

Resources:

- bestfriends.org – Cat Foster Care Manual
- [Bestfriends.org](https://bestfriends.org) – Socializing Cats; How to Socialize Very Shy or Fearful Cat