New cat checklist for a small home

Page 1: measure, shop and set up before the cat comes home. Page 2: the first months.

Apartment Cats

Cat's name _____ **Comes home on** _____ **Age** _____

Measure first

Cat, nose to tail base _____ **x 1.5 =** _____ shortest litter box[1]

Cat lying stretched out _____ **=** shortest shelf or perch[2]

Scratching post _____ aim for over 3 ft (owner survey)[3]

Let the tool do the sums
Litter box, box count, litter depth, post and shelf, drawn to scale.
apartmentcats.com/tools/cat-measuring-tool/

Shopping list that fits the space

Item	Size to look for	Size bought	Where it goes
Litter box 1	at least 1.5 x the cat's length		
Litter box 2	same, for a second spot		
Unscented clumping litter	enough for about 1 to 2 in		
Scoop and a lidded bin or bags			
Food bowl and water bowl	to stand apart		
Scratching post	over 3 ft if it fits		
Perch or shelf	longer than the stretched-out cat		
Carrier			
Wand toy	kept in a closed drawer		
Hiding spot (a box on its side)			

The first room

- [ ] One small room with a door: a bathroom or bedroom works.
- [ ] Food, water and a bed at one end, the litter box at the other.
- [ ] Gaps under the bed or behind furniture blocked off.
- [ ] Carrier left open in the room, a towel inside.

Cat-proofing

- [ ] No lilies or daylilies in the home, not even in a vase.[4]
- [ ] Every houseplant checked on the ASPCA list by scientific name.
- [ ] Windows that open have secure screens; balcony door kept shut.
- [ ] String, hair ties and cords put away; no oil diffusers.[5]

1 AAFP and ISFM house-soiling guidelines, 2014. 2 AAFP and ISFM environmental needs guidelines, 2013. 3 Wilson and others, 2016, owner reports. 4 US FDA. 5 VCA; Merck Veterinary Manual.

The first three days, weeks and months

The 3-3-3 rule is a shelter rule of thumb, not a timetable. Every cat sets its own pace.[1]

Apartment Cats

First 3 days: decompress started ____

- [ ] The cat stays in the first room. Sit quietly; let it come to you.
- [ ] Hiding, eating little or missing the box at first is common, say shelters.
- [ ] Log meals, water and the box below.

First 3 weeks: the routine started ____

- [ ] Meals, play and scooping at the same times each day.
- [ ] One more room at a time, once the cat eats, uses the box and explores.
- [ ] Carrier stays out as a resting spot, with a treat inside now and then.

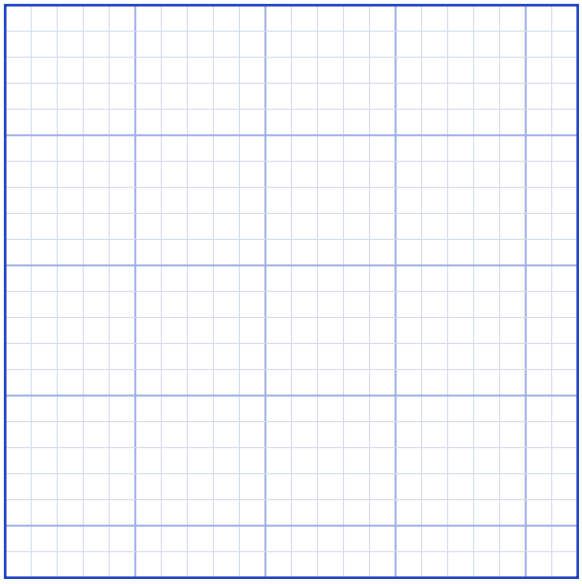
First 3 months: at home started ____

- [ ] Second litter box in its own spot, away from the first.[2]
- [ ] Scratching post and perch where the cat spends its time.

Papers and people

- [ ] Vet chosen and the first visit booked: _____
- [ ] Microchip number noted: _____
- [ ] Rescue or shelter contact, if you adopted: _____
- [ ] 24-hour emergency vet and its address saved.

Plan the home



L litter box F food W water S scratching post
P perch or shelf H hiding spot C carrier

1 square = 1 ft (30 cm). Draw the first room, then where each L, F, W, S, P and H will go.

Call a vet now if

- The cat strains in the litter box and passes little or no urine. This is an emergency, most often in male cats.[3]
- It may have touched a lily or chewed a plant, a cleaner or a medicine. US poison lines: ASPCA Animal Poison Control 888-426-4435, Pet Poison Helpline 855-764-7661.[4] Outside the US, your local animal poison line: _____
- String or thread shows in its mouth. Do not pull it. Or it stops eating, or seems unwell to you.

First days log

Day	Ate	Drank	Urine clumps	Stool	Notes, and questions for the first vet visit
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					

1 Humane Society of the Pikes Peak Region; Pasadena Humane; San Diego Humane Society. 2 AAHA and AAFP 2021: one box per cat plus one. 3 Cornell Feline Health Center. 4 US FDA, which lists both lines.