

CAT FOSTER HANDBOOK



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Table of Contents

Section 1: Introduction	3
1.1 Are you ready to foster?	3
1.2 Frequently asked questions	4
Section 2: Preparing for your foster cat	7
2.1 Supplies you'll need	7
2.2 Cat-proofing your home	8
Section 3: Bringing home your foster cat	9
3.1 Choosing a foster cat	9
3.2 Cat introductions	9
3.3 Dog introductions	10
3.3 Children and cats	10
3.4 The Decompression Period	11
Section 4: Daily care	12
4.1 Feeding	12
4.2 Daily routine	12
4.3 House-training	13
4.4 Carrier training	13
4.5 Grooming	13
4.6 Mental stimulation and exercise	14
4.7 Enrichment and training	14
4.8 Safety requirements	16
Section 5: Helping your foster cat get adopted	16
Frequently asked questions	16
Section 6: Medical and emergency protocols	17
6.1 Veterinary care	17
6.2 Signs of illness and what to do next	17
6.3 Common ailments in animals from shelters	20
6.4 If your foster cat gets loose or goes missing	20
6.5 Criteria for emergencies	21
6.6 Emergency Contact Procedure	21
Section 7: Behavior support	21
Section 8: Preparing for your next foster	22
Appendix	23
Foster Agreement & Waiver	23
Feline Body Language	25
Important Contacts	26

Section 1: Introduction

Thank you so much for your interest in fostering cats for Adoptable Friends, NFP. By opening your home to foster cats, you're not only helping to save lives, you're providing the individual attention and love these cats desperately need.

Foster homes are asked to provide care for the cats, transportation to and from veterinary appointments as needed, as well as transportation to meet and greet appointments with prospective adopters.

Care for foster cats includes feeding according to size and needs, positive interactions, and of course, play time.

Although fostering is a lot of work, it is very rewarding. By participating in this program, you are saving lives and helping many unwanted cats find the families for whom they've been longing.

Through fostering, we can work together to save more lives!

1.1 Are you ready to foster?

Do you have the time to spend with your foster cat/kitten(s)?

While cats don't need as much individual attention as dogs do, we encourage you to devote as much time as you can giving your foster one-on-one attention. This will vary depending on the energy level and needs of the foster cat. Ideally around 2 hours per day spent in play and socializing helps ensure he or she gets adequate attention and stimulation. This helps the cat adjust to home life and allows you to make observations that may be helpful in finding the cat his or her new home. Watching your foster acclimate to the comforts of home will make time fly by!

Can you commit to bringing your foster pet in for various veterinary re-checks?

Depending on the animal, we may need you to schedule occasional appointments with our veterinary partners. These appointments may be weekly or once every two to three weeks.

Are you able to keep your pets separate from your foster cat?

We recommend that your foster cat be kept separate from your other animals for the first 2–4 weeks of their stay (more or less, depending on the cat's independence level and your household environment). This helps the foster cat adjust to your home, keeps all pets safe, and helps avoid illness transmission. It is best to designate a room for the foster cat. This can be a bedroom, bathroom, or other smaller space where the cat can feel safe.

Younger cats/kittens may adjust more quickly, and older or shy cats may take more time.

Are you prepared for the mess? (Or potential property damage)

While cats are usually clean, fostering involves extra litter scooping, feeding and watering which may be messy. Additionally, while we will provide a scratch pad, there is the possibility that the cat may try to scratch on a different item. Adoptable Friends is not responsible for any damage incurred while fostering one of our animals.

Will you be able to bring your foster pet back at the end of the foster period?

Letting go can be hard! We understand, but because of foster parents like you, we can save more lives.

1.2 Frequently asked questions

Where do cats who need foster care come from?

For the most part, cats that need fostering will come from local and nation-wide open-access shelters with whom we partner. These shelters often have too many animals and transfer them to Adoptable Friends to avoid euthanizing them. We may also get kittens that would be prone to disease if left in those crowded conditions. We will work with you to find the animal that fits best with your home environment and lifestyle!

What does Adoptable Friends provide?

We provide you with a travel carrier, collar with ID tag, food, litter and any medications needed along with instructions on how to administer those medications. Each cat will have a scratching box to encourage appropriate scratching. We will also provide behavioral support throughout the foster period. In a nutshell, anything you need to keep kitty healthy and happy until a permanent home is found.

What do foster families need to provide?

Foster families need to provide:

- A healthy and safe environment for their foster cat
- Transportation to and from meet and greet appointments and all vet appointments as needed
- Socialization and cuddle time to help teach cats about positive family and pet relationships
- Willingness and ability to communicate frequently with the Foster Team

If I foster kittens, how many will I have?

Kittens under 8-12 weeks of age will need to stay with littermates in order to learn proper social skills, and litter sizes vary! Older kittens may be fostered individually. We will let you know the situation before asking you to take kittens.

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

Yes. Our foster application is designed as a survey to help the Foster Coordinator match you with the best animal for your needs and your current schedule. If you have a full-time job, the Foster Coordinator will match you with a cat who may be OK alone during the workday. You would just need to provide ample attention to the cat before and after your workday. We cannot place kittens under the age of 3 months in your home if you are out of the house for 6 hours or more at a time.

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 a foster home.

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

Ideally, foster cats stay in their assigned foster homes until they get adopted. We do ask that you allow sufficient time for the cat to adjust to your household after being stressed in a shelter or on transport. The amount of time may vary according to the age and temperament of the cat. Different illnesses or special needs may require different amounts of time for healing.

Will I need to give medicine to my foster cat?

Almost all of the cats that we have in our foster program are rescued from shelters and have been exposed to shelter illnesses. While we do our best to ensure that we are aware of all the conditions that a foster cat may have prior to going home, many illnesses have incubation periods, meaning symptoms can arise after you take the cat home. So, while some cats do not require any medicine, others may. If your foster cat needs medications, we can show you how to administer them before you take the animal home.

Can I foster if I have pets in my home?

Yes. However, you must have the ability to isolate the foster animal in a separate room or section of your home to avoid exposure of an illness to your pet or disrupt the healing time of your foster.

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

There are a few guidelines that we ask foster families to adhere to regarding their personal pets. First, you want to ensure that the foster cat has adjusted to your daily routine and has had the ability to find out about other pets in the house through sniffing items or playing under the door prior to letting the cat out into the common areas. We also advise that you consult with your veterinarian before fostering to ensure that all of your personal pets are healthy and up-to-date on all vaccines. In Illinois, all cats must be vaccinated at 4 months of age.

Initially, your foster cat should always be supervised when playing with your own cats, and supervised at all times in the presence of dogs. As all the animals in the household become comfortable, the foster

may be allowed larger access to the common areas. We recommend, however, that the foster is returned to the original room designated for him/her at night or when supervision is not possible.

Cats in shelters are very susceptible to illness and can carry or catch different diseases. If, for any reason, your personal pet becomes ill while you are fostering an Adoptable Friends cat, we cannot cover medical care costs for your personal pet.

IMPORTANT NOTE: If your personal cat is allowed outdoors, he or she cannot interact with your foster cat. Foster cats are typically more at risk of illness 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?

If you want to adopt your foster cat, you will need to complete an adoption application and follow the full adoption process. We give our foster homes the right of first refusal to adopt their foster cat up until the point at which adoption applications are received and being processed. If you do decide to adopt your foster cat, please contact the Foster Coordinator right away.

What if a family member or friend wants to adopt my foster cat?

If you know someone who wants to adopt your foster cat, please ask them to fill out a cat application at adoptablefriends.org/adopt and let the Foster Coordinator know. The application will be reviewed and references checked as we always make placement decisions in the best interest of the cat.

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

If you have travel plans while you are fostering a cat for Adoptable Friends, you will need to contact the Foster Coordinator to find an alternative arrangement for your foster while you are away. Please provide at least two weeks' notice to ensure that we can find a temporary foster for your cat. If your trip is over a holiday, please provide a minimum of one months' notice.

You cannot leave your foster cat with an unauthorized person or pet sitter. We have specific training for foster parents, and pet sitters have not undergone that training or signed the release waivers for the foster program.

What if my foster cat bites me or becomes aggressive?

If any of your foster pets bite you or any person and breaks your skin causing bleeding, immediately clean the wound thoroughly and report the bite to the Foster Coordinator. The law requires that we report all bites. The teeth of the animal, not the nails, must have broken the skin. If you are unsure, then please report the bite anyway. Please report any aggressive behavior you observe to the Foster Coordinator immediately. The Foster Coordinator will share the report with the Executive Director and someone will contact you directly for further information.

What if my foster cat is not working out?

You are not required to continue to foster a cat if you feel it's not working out. However, we may not have an immediate alternate foster home. We will work on moving your foster cat out as quickly as possible but ask for your understanding and patience. Please call the Foster Coordinator during business hours if this situation arises.

Can I foster a cat to fulfill a community service obligation?

Unfortunately, Adoptable Friends, NFP cannot sign off on court-ordered community service hours for fostering. Community service is supervised work, and fostering is unsupervised, since it takes place in your home. If you need community service hours, on-site volunteering is an option. You can sign up online at adoptablefriends.org/volunteer.

Section 2: Preparing for your foster cat

When you take your foster cat home, they will be frightened and unsure about what's happening, so it's important not to overwhelm them. Prepare a special area for the foster cat to help ease their adjustment into a new home environment. As mentioned previously, it is better to confine the foster cat to a small room or area at first, to let them adjust before giving them free rein in your home. Equip the room with food, a scratch box, water dishes and a litter box.

Another reason we recommend a small room is because cats will typically hide in new environments. It is common for a foster cat to hide underneath a bed or in a dark quiet place for the first several days. Isolating your foster cat when you first take them home allows you to know what room they are in and helps you monitor eating, drinking and litter box habits more closely.

We request that all foster cats be housed indoors only. An unfinished basement, garage, backyard or outdoor run is not a suitable accommodation for a foster cat.

During the first couple of weeks, minimize the people and pet introductions to your foster cat, so that they only meet immediate family and your personal pets. If you have other pets at home, it is especially important to give your foster cat a space of their own where they can stay while getting used to all the new sounds and smells. Do not leave your foster cat unattended in your home with your personal pets.

2.1 Supplies you'll need

We will provide you with anything you need to foster, including a collar with an ID tag, a supply of food, and medications needed as well as instructions on how to administer those medications. We greatly

appreciate any help you can give in supplying items for your foster cat. Here's a list of what you will need to help your foster cat make a smooth transition to living in your home.

- At least one bowl for dry food and one for water. Stainless steel works best.
- A collar with an ID tag. Even though foster cats are microchipped, they still need an ID tag, in case they escape from your home.
- A soft place to sleep. Old towels or blankets work well if you don't have a cat bed.
- Uncovered litter box. Make sure the box is the appropriate size for the cat.
- Litter. Adoptable Friends would prefer the use of the pelleted bedding for horses and small animals from Tractor Supply that is provided to you or the Tidy Cat Breeze Litter Box System. Cleaning this litter is very different from clumping litter, the Foster Coordinator will show you how to clean this type of litter.
- Scratching posts or trays. We will provide floor boxes or hanging scratchers, whatever the cat prefers.
- Cat treats. Giving treats is a good way to help train and build a positive relationship with your foster cat.
- Cat toys. Make sure they are durable and safe (without bits that will be harmful if swallowed).
- Grooming supplies. A well-groomed cat has a better chance of being adopted.

2.2 Cat-proofing your home

Foster cats come from a shelter environment, and even if they have previously lived in a home, we don't always know how they will react in a new home. So, before bringing home a new foster cat, you'll want to survey the area where you are going to house the cat. Remove anything that would be unsafe or undesirable for the cat to chew on, and securely latch any cupboards and doors that the foster cat could get into. Cats like to climb up on curtains, shelves or bookcases, so you'll want to remove anything that can be knocked down. Human food, chemicals, and plants can be very harmful if consumed by cats, so please store them in a place that the foster cat cannot access. Never underestimate your foster cat's abilities.

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. (don't forget bathroom trash bins.)
- Keep 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 foster cat.

- Remove medications, lotions, or cosmetics from any accessible surfaces.
- Move and secure all curtain draw cords, 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 foster cat if consumed.
- Relocate knick knacks or valuable items that your foster cat could knock down.

Section 3: Bringing home your foster cat

Taking care of a foster cat requires a commitment from you and the members of your family to make sure the cat is happy and healthy. Thank you so much for opening your heart and your home to these cats who desperately need your help.

3.1 Choosing a foster cat

The Foster Coordinator will work with you to select a foster cat or kittens who meets your specific requirements. We will always do our best to match you with a foster that fits with your lifestyle and schedule. If the foster is on medications, the Foster Coordinator can show you how to administer them.

The Foster Coordinator will meet you and introduce you to your foster. Together, you and the Foster Coordinator will decide if the placement is the right fit for you.

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.

When you and the Foster Coordinator have decided on a foster, an appointment will be scheduled so you can pick up your foster and any supplies that you will need. The appointment will typically be at Adoptable Friends in Mundelein, IL.

3.2 Cat introductions

If you have personal pets who are cats, you'll need to introduce them to your foster cat. Even if you know the cat you are fostering is good with other cats, you'll want to do the introductions gradually. So, before bringing your foster cat home, create a separate "territory" for them. 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 a 1-to-2-week period, let the cats smell each other through a closed door, but don't allow them contact with one another. Exchanging blankets or towels between the areas will help them get used to each other's smell. Over the next 1-to-2-week period, allow them to see each other through a baby gate, screen door 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 again and introduce them more slowly. Never try to separate cats who are fighting with your hands or body parts.

3.3 Dog introductions

We can't ensure that a foster cat has been "dog-tested," so if you have personal pets who are dogs, you'll need to make the introduction to the foster cat carefully and safely. Start by keeping them separated at first. Keep your foster cat in a separate room (equipped with food, water, scratch box, litter box and bed).

Over a 1-to 2-week period, let the dog and cat smell each other through the door, but don't allow them contact with one another. Exchanging blankets or towels between the dog's area and the cat's' area will help them get used to each other's smell. Over the next 1-to 2- week period, do a face-to-face introduction. Allow them to see each other through a baby gate, or screen door. While on a leash allow your dog to walk past the foster cat's area with you. (If you have more than one dog, introduce one dog at a time.) Always keep a barrier or screen door between your dog and the foster cat for safety. Provide your dog with treats while the foster cat is also enjoying a meal, while in view of each other a comfortable distance away. This creates a positive association for your foster cat who may not be used to dogs. Do not allow your dog to charge or run directly up to the foster cat. Try to distract the dog as best you can so that the foster cat has the chance to approach or retreat without fear. Watch the body language of each animal closely and don't continue the interaction if either pet becomes over-stimulated or aggressive. The idea is to keep the interactions positive, short, safe, and controlled. If you see any signs of high stress or anxiety in the foster cat, please notify the Foster Coordinator immediately. You can then discuss whether you feel you can manage this situation or will need to return the foster cat. The safety of the pets is of utmost importance to us. If you would like help with the initial introduction please let the Foster Coordinator know .

Finally, never leave your foster cat unsupervised with any dogs or cats in your home.

3.3 Children and cats

Since we don't always know a foster cat's history or tolerance level for different types of people and activities, please teach your children how to act responsibly and respectfully around your foster cat. We will do our best to place you with an appropriate animal for your home situation, but you should still supervise all interactions between children and your foster cat.

Key things to remember:

- Always leave the foster cat alone when he/she is eating, grooming or sleeping. Cats may nip or bite if bothered while eating or startled while sleeping.
- Do not allow your children to hug, carry, touch, or attempt to kiss your foster cat. The cat needs to invite your child into their personal space.
- Do not allow your children to take anything away from the foster cat.
- Do not allow your children to tease the foster cat. Do not allow children to pull on feet, tails, fur, hold the cat's face or stick fingers in the cat's ears.
- Don't allow your children to chase the foster cat around the house or run quickly around the foster cat; it may scare or excite them.
- Remind your children to pick up all their toys. Some cats may not be able to tell the difference between what is theirs and what belongs to the kids.

3.4 The Decompression Period

The decompression period is the first two or four weeks after your foster cat comes home. During this time, your foster cat really has no idea who you are, or what to expect in their new life. This needs to be a quiet time in your home, so the foster cat can get used to your family, the new home, routines, feel comfortable, and begin the bonding process.

During this time, we recommend the following:

- Provide the cat a quiet comfortable space, preferably the room it will continue to be housed in. Spend time with the foster cat daily—just sit quietly with them and observe their behavior. Allow the bond between you to happen naturally be extra patient.
- No field trips. This means the only place you should take your foster cat is to the vet.
- No walks. Your foster cat should remain indoors.
- No visitors. Your foster cat needs to spend time bonding with you and additional strangers can be difficult for your foster cat.
- Do not invade the foster cat's personal space unless you are invited, keep interactions calm, quiet and brief. Cats are very independent, so allow them the choice to interact with you.

After the first two to four weeks (though some cats may become more comfortable sooner than others) it's important to begin training. The kind of training you do depends on your foster cat. Shy or timid cats may need extra time and special attention to help them to be more confident, build their self-esteem, and learn to trust. In order to be stress free, comfortable and confident around humans' cats need structured education using play as well as topic-based training exercises. Cats need to accept handling so we can provide stress-free teeth brushing, nail care, ear maintenance, basic grooming and safe examination when needed.

Section 4: Daily care

4.1 Feeding

All foster cats should be fed twice daily unless otherwise specified by the Foster Coordinator. We ask that you use the food we provide so as to not upset your foster cat's digestive system. The amount will be based on the age and weight of your foster cat. We recommend keeping a daily log of your foster cat's food intake so if something seems wrong with their eating schedule, you can go back and check. Make sure the cat always has access to fresh, clean water. Filtered water is preferred if possible. Cats may drink more and stay better hydrated if a fountain is used.

Cats are natural hunters — we love food delivery toys or interacting/playing with the cat prior to a meal to meet this instinctual need. These feeding methods will provide mental enrichment, physical enrichment and help to form a solid bond of trust with humans. Our favorites are the Catit Treat Ball Cat Toy, Pet Fit for Life 5 Piece Squiggly Worm Wand Cat Toy, Doc & Phoebe's Cat Co. The Hunting Snacker Interactive Cat Treat Toy, and Petstages Mousin' Around Hide 'N Treat Dispenser Cat Toy... to just name a few. The JW Pet Hol-ee Roller Dog Toy may also be used to put cat food in for mealtimes. Chewy.com has a great selection of these and other puzzle toys.

Please feed your foster cat separately from your resident cat(s) or other foster cat(s) to eliminate the risk of cat fights or bully behaviors. We want to make sure that everyone can get enough food and relax while eating. If your two fosters, or your foster and resident cat are fighting or seem uncomfortable around each other, separate them. Contact the Foster Coordinator immediately for advice. DO NOT attempt to take away food or a toy from a cat who is growling. Instead, wait until it is abandoned and then pick it up and put it away. If you need to remove an item from your foster cat, please present a high-value food reward to them as a "trade" by throwing it to the ground away from the item you need to take.

You can give your foster cat treats of any kind (unless they have known allergies, of course); giving treats for desired behaviors provides the positive reinforcement the cat needs to bond with you and create good behaviors for living in a household.

4.2 Daily routine

When you first take your foster cat home, be careful not to overwhelm them with too many new experiences. Sometimes, too much stimulation can cause a cat to behave unexpectedly toward a person or animal. For this reason, we ask that you keep introductions to a minimum during at least the first two to four weeks after you bring your foster cat home. It's also important to establish a daily

routine of regularly scheduled feedings, social observations (just sitting with the cat) and play times. Cats take comfort in having a routine they can count on. Make sure you are aware of your foster cat's appetite, drinking habits and energy level. If your foster cat is not eating well or seems listless, something may be wrong medically. Recording your observations in a journal can help make it easier to notice any health issues.

4.3 House-training

Your foster cat will be litter box trained. Contact the Foster Coordinator immediately for advice if your foster cat is avoiding or not using the litter box daily.

4.4 Carrier training

Carrier training, done in a positive way, can be an effective component of taking your foster cat in the car, to events, or to doctor visits. A carrier can be a safe place of comfort for your foster cat to rest and relax. A carrier should never be used as a form of punishment and a cat should never be left in a carrier for an extended period of time. You can prevent transportation problems by carrier training your foster cat in the home. Here is how we recommend you teach your foster cat to enjoy their carrier:

- a. Remove the top half of the carrier and place a cat bed or soft towel inside the bottom half.
- b. **Reward It.** Toss food rewards into the cat bed or towel inside the bottom of the carrier. Begin feeding the cat their meals in the carrier, too.
- c. **Pay it & Praise.** Reward your cat with a treat and give them attention when they are in the carrier.
- d. **Repeat it.** Repeat the exercise daily, be sure to give attention and verbal praise any time the cat chooses to lay in their carrier. You can also place special food rewards or catnip in the carrier for the foster cat to hunt/find on their own. Hunting provides needed enrichment for all animals. Only put the top on the carrier when the cat is totally comfortable going into the carrier without it.

4.5 Grooming

A clean and well-groomed cat has a better chance of getting adopted. Brush your foster cat regularly if they will allow it. If you are comfortable, you can trim their nails as well. Nail trimming can be a difficult process for some of our feline friends. Please progress slowly so the foster cat doesn't become stressed or fearful, since nail care is a lifelong event for our cats. Contact the Foster Coordinator if you need help or ideas on how to help your foster cat become more comfortable being handled, brushed, combed or having nails trimmed.

4.6 Mental stimulation and exercise

Depending on your foster cat's age and energy level, they should get at least two 30-minute play sessions per day with you. Rotate toys in the cat's area every few days so they have some fun and interesting things to play with. For cats, the normal daily process before eating meals is to hunt, then after eating they groom and sleep. Fulfilling these natural needs daily for our foster cats keeps them healthy, calm, emotionally balanced, and at peace.

Remember we want to discourage the cat from biting or scratching hands and feet. So, while playing, use toys since mouthing won't be a desirable behavior to adopters. Remember to allow the kitten or cat to approach you to play and interact. If the kitten or cat is not interested in social time do not enter the animal's personal space as this could force a bite or scratch to happen.

While dogs chew to remain calm, relaxed and comfortable, cats need to scratch. Cats also need to be rewarded with food and praised for scratching on the right objects or locations. Scratching exercises the cat's whole body—shoulders, chest, back, core as well as feet and legs.

Here are a few suggestions of scratch furniture options that we love:

- SmartCat The Ultimate 32-in Sisal Cat Scratching Post
- Frisco Wall Sisal Cat Scratcher
- Royal Cat Boutique Kitty Treadmill Cat Scratcher
- Katris Nest Cat Beds (made from cardboard)

4.7 Enrichment and training

Cats are social beings that need both physical and mental exercise. While they need time to decompress and begin building trust, it is important to provide exercise that is appropriate for their personality and age. Foster cats need to be given the opportunity to explore the world around them at their own pace.

Enrichment

Foster cats need the opportunity to express normal cat behaviors in a safe, comfortable way. Normal cat behaviors include hunting/scavenging, chasing, scratching/biting, climbing, playing, hiding in boxes and grooming. Cats also seem to enjoy movement, so a water fountain is a great way to provide a fresh active source of water. Your foster cat may have learned to survive through these behaviors. Daily enrichment allows your foster cat to be mentally, emotionally, and physically satisfied.

Here are some easy ways to provide an opportunity for your foster cat to have appropriate outlets for these behaviors:

1. Work to Eat

Your foster cat should eat at least one meal from a food puzzle or toy. Some of our favorites are a snuffle mat, a paper egg carton or paper towel roll (with the ends folded close), or a food dispensing ball.

2. Nose Work Games

Your foster cat will enjoy using their nose to find treats you have hidden or scattered. Treats/food can be randomly placed within their safe space area so they can hunt for them when they are comfortable doing so.

3. Viewing and Smelling the Outdoors

A nice window perch and access to a breeze through a screen door or window invites the indoors in and allows the cat to experience the world outdoors safely.

Training

Your foster cat will need to learn social manners that can help them transition to their new permanent home and family. Foundation skills are necessary for every cat. Your foster cat is always learning whether or not you are actively training!

Here are the foundation skills we would like you to practice every day. Remember that mealtime is a great time to train!

1. Form the Human/Cat Bond

Feed some meals by hand so the cat feels comfortable around you. Use treats and food to teach your foster cat that people provide good things. When they begin to turn to look at you or move toward you mark with "YES," drop the food to the floor or allow them to approach a plastic spoon to eat treat and REPEAT.

2. Fist Bumps or Targeting/Touch

Teach your foster cat that hands give! Place a small food reward in your fist. Present your fist in front of your foster cat with your fingers facing down. When they show any interest in it, mark that behavior with "YES," open your hand and "pez out" the reward to the floor. Repeat, rewarding your foster cat for each subsequent movement forward until your foster cat is touching your fist with their nose or a paw. Once they understand the game, only mark and reward them for actual touches to your hand with their nose or paw.

3. Ready... Get It

Teach your foster cat to pay attention to you! Begin with a small handful of food/treats. Say "Ready!" when they look at you then "bowl" a piece of food reward across the floor. When your foster cat starts to chase the food, give the cue "GET IT" or "FIND IT" and allow the game to unfold. Your foster cat will chase and eat the food. Wait until he turns around to look at you and mark the look back with "YES," then toss another piece of food. You are rewarding the focus

back to you, NOT eye contact. Repeat the exercise several times each day for a fun focus skill. Make it a game! This is a great way to establish a bond with your foster cat and while draining some of their energy. Once the cat understands this game you can advance the exercise and have the cat touch your open palm before you “bowl” the food across the floor. This creates a fast action game of treat and retreat, which cats enjoy.

4.8 Safety requirements

Foster cats must live indoors, not outside. Please do not allow your foster cat outside. During the decompression period (2-4 weeks), your foster cat needs to remain in their designated area. Once they are comfortable more access and social freedom can be provided.

Section 5: Helping your foster cat get adopted

Frequently asked questions

Will I need to take my foster cat to adoption events?

The Foster Coordinator will contact you to schedule a meet and greet with a potential adopter as requested. Public adoption events can cause stress and anxiety for many of our feline friends. Capturing video that we can post to our social media is a great way for people to fall in love with a cat that needs a forever home.

How can I help my foster cat find a great home?

As you get to know your foster cat, we ask that you stay in frequent contact with the Foster Coordinator so that he/she can update the foster animal's biography online to reflect accurate information about the cat's preferences and quirks. We encourage foster families to write their own biography for their foster cats (we reserve the right to edit them before publishing them). We also welcome any quality photos or video that you take of your foster cat in your home; we can use the photos/video to create a kennel card to accompany the online biography. Please send the info about your foster cat, video and photos to info@adoptablefriends.org, and include “Attn: Social Media Coordinator” in the subject line. Please keep in mind that anyone who shows interest in adopting your foster cat will need to go through the adoption process and speak with a staff member before taking the animal home.

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

If you know someone who wants to adopt your foster cat, please ask them to fill out an application at adoptablefriends.org/adopt and let the Foster Coordinator know. The application will be reviewed and references checked as we always make placement decisions in the best interest of the cat.

Will it be hard to say goodbye to my foster cat?

Saying goodbye can be the most difficult part of fostering, but keep in mind that many more cats in shelters need wonderful foster homes like yours.

Section 6: Medical and emergency protocols

Adoptable Friends uses Maddie's Pet Assistant for vaccine and treatment reminders for your foster pet. You will receive reminders via email and you are responsible for scheduling appointments for your cat's vaccines with our Foster Coordinator or around the due dates indicated in the email. If you are fostering a cat who is on medications, please make sure that they get all prescribed doses. Do not end medication early for any reason. If your foster animal has not responded to prescribed medications after five days (or in the time instructed by a veterinarian), please contact the Foster Coordinator.

6.1 Veterinary care

Adoptable Friends provides all medical care for our foster animals at our approved veterinary partners. Because we are ultimately responsible for your foster cat's well-being, our staff must authorize any and all treatment for foster cats at our approved veterinary partners. If your foster cat needs to go to the veterinarian, please notify the Foster Coordinator by email or phone. The Foster Coordinator will schedule the appointment with our veterinary partner. For non-emergency situations, please understand that our veterinary partners book quickly and may not be available for same-day appointments. We ask that you request basic non-emergency appointments with our Foster Coordinator (drop-off, pick-up, vaccines and supply pick-ups) at least 48 hours in advance. Remember, foster parents will be responsible for payment of any medical care if they take their foster animal to a veterinarian without authorization from the Foster Coordinator. If you wish to take your foster pet to a veterinarian who is not a partner, you risk having to cover the costs out of pocket.

6.2 Signs of illness and what to do next

Cats generally do a good job of masking when they don't feel well, so determining if your foster cat is under the weather will require diligent observation of the cat's daily activity and appetite levels. 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.

Loss of appetite

Your foster cat may be stressed after arriving in your home, and stress can cause lack of appetite. But if the cat hasn't eaten after 24 hours, please notify the Foster Coordinator. After settling in, if the cat has been eating well, but then stops eating for 12 to 24 hours, call the Foster Coordinator to set up a vet

appointment. Please do not change the cat's diet without contacting the Foster Coordinator. An abrupt change in diet can cause diarrhea, which can lead to dehydration.

Lethargy

The activity level of your foster cat will vary depending on age and personality. Keeping an activity log and journal will help you notice whether your foster cat is less active than they normally are. If the cat cannot be roused or seems weak and unable to stand, it's an emergency, so contact the Foster Coordinator immediately.

Diarrhea

It is important to monitor your foster cat's pooping habits daily. Soft stool is normal for the first day or two after taking a cat home, most likely caused by stress and a change in food. If your foster cat has liquid stool, however, please contact the Foster Coordinator so that an appointment can be scheduled to ensure that the cat doesn't need medications. Keep in mind that diarrhea will dehydrate the cat, so be proactive about encouraging the cat to drink—a water fountain is a good way to help promote drinking. If your foster cat has bloody diarrhea or you see mucus present, please contact the Foster Coordinator immediately.

Vomiting

Sometimes cats will eat too quickly or too much or have a hairball and will immediately throw up their food. Occasional vomiting isn't cause for alarm, but if your foster cat has thrown up two or more times in one day, please notify the Foster Coordinator. It could be indicative of an underlying medical issue.

Dehydration

Diarrhea and vomiting can cause dehydration. To test for dehydration, gently pinch the cat's skin around the scruff area. If the skin stays taut or in a tent shape, the cat is dehydrated. Please call the Foster Coordinator the next business day to schedule a vet appointment.

Pain or strain while urinating

When a cat first goes into a foster home, they may not urinate due to stress. If the cat hasn't urinated for more than 24 hours, however, please contact the Foster Coordinator. If you notice the cat straining, vocalizing or avoiding the litter box to urinate with little or no results, please contact the Foster Coordinator immediately because it may be indicative of an infection or an obstruction.

Frequent ear scratching

Your foster cat may have a bacterial or yeast infection (or, in rare cases, ear mites) if they scratch their ears often and/or shake their head frequently. These conditions can be treated by a veterinarian, so please call the Foster Coordinator to schedule a medical appointment.

Swollen, irritated ears

If your foster cat has irritated, swollen, dirty, red or pink ears that smell like yeast, they may have an ear infection called otitis. Please contact the Foster Coordinator for instructions on treatment and maintenance.

Hair loss

Please contact the Foster Coordinator if you notice any hair loss on your foster cat. It is normal for cats to have thin fur around the lips, eyelids and in front of the ears, but clumpy patches of hair loss or thinning hair can indicate ringworm, dermatitis or the early stages of mange. It is important to check your foster cat's coat every day.

DISCHARGE:

Eye discharge

It is normal for cats to have some discharge from their eyes occasionally when they wake up and some may have more than others, depending on the breed. But if your foster cat has yellow or green discharge, or swelling around the eyes (making it hard for them to open their eyes), or the third eyelid is showing, you need to contact the Foster Coordinator to schedule a vet appointment. In the meantime, you may gently clean the area with a warm, moist washcloth if the cat will tolerate it.

Nasal Discharge/Coughing

If your foster cat is coughing frequently, watch for discharge coming from the nose. If the discharge is clear, the infection is probably viral and medication may not be needed. Please observe the cat for any loss of appetite, excessive water drinking, lethargy or irritability, and call the Foster Coordinator to find out if a vet appointment is necessary.

If the discharge becomes colored the cat may have a bacterial infection and you should notify the Foster Coordinator to make a vet appointment. Be sure to monitor the cat's breathing. If the cat seems to struggle to breathe or starts wheezing, call the Foster Coordinator immediately. Once you notice nasal discharge it is important to monitor the cat's eating habits more closely to ensure that they are still eating.

Vaginal Discharge

There are many reasons for vaginal discharge some of which are not serious and others which are. If your foster female experiences bloody discharge, discharge that looks like pus or mucus, monitor her for bloody or cloudy urine, difficulty holding urine, frequent urination, behavior and appetite changes. Call the Foster Coordinator to find out whether a vet visit will be needed.

Penile Discharge

Normal penile discharge is clear fluid. If you notice pus or bloody discharge, please monitor the cat for lethargy, lack of appetite, incontinence, excessive licking and redness/swelling of the area and contact the Foster Coordinator to determine whether a vet visit is needed.

Wound Drainage

If your foster cat has a wound when you take him home, the Foster Coordinator will provide you with instructions about caring for the wound. If the wound drainage changes in amount, odor, or color please contact the Foster Coordinator for guidance. If your foster develops a wound, please note the absence/presence of drainage, including the amount, odor and color and contact the Foster Coordinator for instructions.

6.3 Common ailments in animals from shelters

Shelter cats may suffer from upper respiratory infections, giardia or intestinal parasites. Symptoms of an upper respiratory infection include crusty nose and/or eyes, discharge from the nose and/or eyes, sneezing, decrease in appetite, dehydration and slight lethargy. Symptoms of giardia or intestinal parasites include vomiting, diarrhea (often with a pungent odor) dehydration, lethargy, and a lack of appetite or desire to eat. If your foster cat is displaying one or more of these signs, please contact the Foster Coordinator. These ailments will worsen if left untreated.

6.4 If your foster cat gets loose or goes missing

If your foster cat gets loose or goes missing, immediately call the Foster Coordinator. Then notify your local police departments and local animal control, if available. You will have the cat's microchip number in case they are picked up. Place any bedding your foster cat has used near the door of your home. The scent may help your foster find their way back. Make sure that someone is home watching while others are out looking for the cat. We appreciate any help you can give us in recovering our lost foster cat. If the cat returns to your home, please check them over carefully to determine whether there are any injuries, cuts or scrapes. Call the Foster Coordinator with this information. The Foster Coordinator may ask you to bring the cat in for a checkup. If the cat is picked up by Animal Control, they will be returned to Adoptable Friends for a medical assessment and determination of the next steps. It's important to remember that being away from your home is a very stressful event. Be aware that the cat may withdraw initially and require less activity. Depending on the length of the absence, you may want to restart the decompression protocol again, although the cat will usually respond more quickly than initially. Once the cat is returned, please be observant of any changes in stool, as it is easy for a cat to pick up parasites.

6.5 Criteria for emergencies

What constitutes a medical emergency in a cat? A good rule of thumb is any situation in which you would call 911 for a person. Here are some specific symptoms that could indicate an emergency:

- Not breathing or labored breathing
- Symptoms of illness: bloody diarrhea, vomiting, weakness, suspected fever
- Signs of extreme dehydration: dry mucous membranes, weakness, vomiting, tenting of the skin (when the skin is pulled up, it stays there)
- Abnormal lethargy, unable to stand, wobbly, altered balance
- 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

If your foster cat displays any of these symptoms, contact the Foster Coordinator immediately by phone (847-260-8556). If the animal is vomiting or has diarrhea, but is still active, eating and drinking, you can probably wait until the next day to get help.

6.6 Emergency Contact Procedure

Call (847) 260-8556 in case of an emergency to authorize medical care for your foster animal.

Adoptable Friends partners with **Preiser Animal Hospital** in **Northbrook, IL** as our primary veterinary provider during normal business hours. If your foster animal needs after-hour or emergency vet care. After calling the number above, you will be asked to take the animal to **Veterinary Specialty Center** in **Deerfield/Bannockburn**. Exceptions may be made at Adoptable Friends' discretion.

Preiser Animal Hospital, Northbrook, IL

2975 N Milwaukee Ave, Northbrook, IL 60062
(847) 827-5200

Veterinary Specialty Center, Buffalo Grove, IL

2051 Waukegan Rd, Bannockburn, IL 60015
847-459-7535

Section 7: Behavior support

One of your goals as a foster parent is to help prepare your foster cat for living successfully in a home. So, we ask that you help your foster cat to develop good habits and skills through the use of positive reinforcement training, which builds trust between you and your foster pet. The basic idea is to reward desirable behaviors and to adequately manage the environment to prevent unwanted behaviors from occurring.

You must not physically punish, yell, or spray water at a cat for a behavior that you find undesirable because punishment is ineffective at eliminating the behavior. If the cat is doing something undesirable, distract and redirect them before the behavior occurs, or manage the situation so the cat cannot rehearse the behavior in the future. It is also important for every human in the foster home to stick to the rules established for your foster cat so they can learn faster. When interacting with your foster cat, refrain from wrestling or engaging in play that encourages the cat to bite or scratch your body. If you feel unable to manage any behavior that your foster cat is exhibiting, please contact the Foster Coordinator during business hours to discuss the issue. We will put you in touch with our Training Director who will guide you on how to work on the behavior issue. It will be helpful to have videos of the issue to share with the Training Director, so please do your best to safely record any incidents that occur.

Section 8: Preparing for your next foster

Cats and kittens may leave behind germs that can put your next foster pet at risk for disease transmission. To prevent this, we ask that you follow this specific cleaning protocol before bringing home another foster pet:

- Remove and wash anything your foster slept on or played with
- Scrub everything that your foster could have touched with a diluted bleach solution or an alternative (see below)
- Food and water dishes can be washed in the dishwasher or soaked in dilute bleach for 10 minutes
- Clean all toys with dilute bleach
- Wash all bedding in hot water and dry on a hot setting
- Throw away anything that cannot be bleached

Diluted bleach solution: ¼ Cups Chlorine Bleach, 2 ¾ Cups Warm Water

Alternative to bleach solution: Odoban (purchase at Home Depot, ACE Hardware), Clorox Clean Up

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

Appendix

Foster Agreement & Waiver

Our official Foster Agreement & Waiver is part of the application to foster that you initially filled out online. The terms are listed below as reminders.

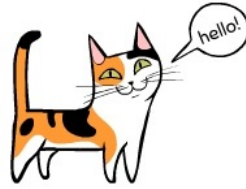
1. I agree to foster a cat/kitten(s) with Adoptable Friends and understand and will abide by the expectations described in the following statements as indicated by an "Agree" response.
2. I commit to fostering the foster cat or kitten for a minimum of 2 weeks unless I have an explicit agreement with the Foster Coordinator for a shorter time frame.
3. The foster cat or kitten(s) will be kept indoors at all times.
4. I will work through behavior needs such as litter box use and appropriate scratching (post or floor box) and other minor behavior issues common in foster cats/kittens.
5. I understand that I am to contact the Adoptable Friends Foster Coordinator if I am unable to resolve any of the issues listed in the above question.
6. I understand that if I need to return a foster cat/kitten(s) or request a temporary foster, I will contact the Foster Coordinator at least 3 days in advance unless it's an emergency.
7. I will confine my foster cat or kitten(s) while I am out or unable to supervise or make sure my foster cannot damage my property.
8. I will not hand off my foster cat or kitten(s) to any other person without the prior approval of the Foster Coordinator.
9. I will provide marketing information (bio, updates, pictures, videos) throughout the foster period. I will provide these to the Social Media Coordinator for distribution to outlets other than my personal social media.
10. I confirm that I am willingly offering to foster and that I do not expect any goods or services in return, including an application for an application fee reduction or waiver should I decide to adopt my foster cat or kitten(s).
11. I understand that Adoptable Friends has the final say on who adopts each foster cat/kitten(s).
12. I will immediately report any bite or behavioral issue to the Foster Coordinator.
13. I will immediately notify the Foster Coordinator if my foster cat/kitten gets out or lost.
14. I will not allow children, minors or any person outside my household to care for the foster cat/kitten(s).
15. Medical Care Acknowledgement: Adoptable Friends is committed to ensuring our animals get the care they need to transition into their forever homes. These cats/kitten(s) come from a variety of shelters, which makes it impossible to know if they have been in contact with a contagious disease. I understand the potential risk and acknowledge the following statements as indicated with an "Agree" response.

16. I will not take a foster cat or kitten(s) unless my resident animals have all the vaccinations recommended by my vet.
17. I understand that although any cat/kitten that I foster has been/will be medically examined and appropriately vaccinated, it is possible they may still be carrying a disease from a previous shelter or may have an underlying medical issue not initially identified on intake.
18. I will respect and defer to Adoptable Friends decisions regarding the care of a foster cat or kitten(s).
19. I will notify the Foster Coordinator immediately if my foster cat or kitten shows any signs of illness or injury.
20. I understand that Adoptable Friends approves and provides all medical care for foster animals and I will NOT be reimbursed for the cost of any unapproved medical care.
21. I understand that if my resident animal becomes ill due to a contagious disease from my foster cat/kitten that I will not be reimbursed for medical expenses.
22. I understand that any loss, such as illness, injury, or property damage to myself, my resident animals, or any other persons, animal or object occurs as the result of my not following any of the Adoptable Friends rules or guidelines, I am solely responsible for that loss.

CAT LANGUAGE



INTERESTED



FRIENDLY



ATTENTIVE



RELAXED



TRUSTING



FRIENDLY, RELAXED



CONTENT



CONFLICTED, CAUTIOUS



PLAYFUL



EXCITED



"THIS IS MINE"



ANXIOUS



PREDATORY



WORRIED



FRIGHTENED



THREATENED



TERRIFIED



SUPER TERRIFIED



IRRITATED



DISGUSTED

Important Contacts

Foster Coordinator

Pam Kitts, Executive Director

pam@adoptablefriends.org

847-260-8556

Preiser Animal Hospital, Northbrook, IL

2975 Milwaukee Ave, Northbrook, IL 60062

[847-827-5200](tel:847-827-5200)

Veterinary Specialty Center, Buffalo Grove, IL

2051 Waukegan Rd, Bannockburn, IL 60015

847-459-7535