

Moving house

cats.org.uk



Moving house can be a big deal for cats. Much of their feeling of security and ability to relax comes from being surrounded by the familiar sights, sounds and scents of their own territory. It is also very stressful for humans too, so some thought and careful planning will ensure it's a smooth move for everyone.



Planning ahead

There are two options for moving day:

- booking your cat into a cattery
- or taking them with you as you move

Which one you choose depends on your own personal preference and your cat's character, as every cat is different.

Booking your cat into a boarding cattery

If you book your cat into a boarding cattery for a few days, you won't have to worry about them while you move. This may be the easiest solution for both of you, although time in a cattery can be stressful for cats. You will need to organise it well in advance and make sure your cat's vaccinations are up to date prior to moving.

If possible it is best to book them into the cattery for the day before you move, so they are away from all the commotion.

Keeping your cat with you

This option requires a bit more planning. What follows is just a guide. Everyone's circumstances are different, so you may need to alter parts of it to fit your own situation and your cat's character.

Two weeks before the move

- Allocate a 'safe room' in your home that can be cleared of furniture a week or two before the move
- At the same time, decide on a 'safe room' in the new home where you can put your cat when you get there
- Both rooms should be out of the way so your cat can be left undisturbed for as much of the move as possible

One week before the move

- Start getting your cat used to their 'safe room' in the current house and allow them to explore it
 - Put in an additional sleeping place, litter tray, cat carrier and blanket
 - Begin feeding them here too so they become familiar with their 'safe room'

Evening before the move

- Move their scratching post, toys and water bowl into the room, secure the windows and shut them in to make sure they don't go missing

If you have more than one cat, make sure they have separate food and water bowls, litter trays, scratching posts and beds if possible, to help prevent further stress or any toileting accidents.

If you know your cats don't enjoy each other's company, it may be better to give them separate 'safe rooms'.

The importance of scent

Cats rely heavily on their sense of smell and will settle quicker if their new home smells familiar. Your cat has glands on their face and head that produce pheromones. These are scented chemicals that act as a communication system for cats. Rubbing their scent onto you, or objects around them, marks them as familiar. The smell also tells the cat they are in a safe place. You can take a clean, unused cloth and wipe it around your cat's face to pick up their scents. Then wipe this around the furniture in the new house at cat height.

You can get these safe and secure pheromones as synthetic copies within a plug-in diffuser or spray, such as FELIWAY®. This helps mark a new place or situation as safe and secure for cats, reassuring them and reducing their stress. It can be used before and after the house move. Visit cats.org.uk/shop/other-ways-to-help/ceva for more information.

Moving day

- Keep them in their 'safe room', feed them a small meal, make sure they have fresh water, clean the litter tray and shut the door. If they are prone to travel sickness it is worth withholding food for three to four hours before the journey
- When you are ready to leave, put them into their carrier and load them into the car along with all of their belongings. Your cat may be less anxious if the carrier is sprayed with synthetic facial pheromones, such as FELIWAY®, at least 15 minutes before placing your cat in the carrier

At your new home

- Take your cat to their new 'safe room' with all their familiar belongings
- Give them:
 - something that smells of you, like an unwashed item of clothing, to help them settle
 - food and water
 - a box or something to hide in
 - a litter tray
- Close the door and leave your cat alone for a while

- Tell the removal staff and the rest of the family which room your cat is in so they don't disturb them or accidentally let them out. Put a sign on the door as a reminder

Settling in

Keep your cat in their new 'safe room' for a few days; it can be overwhelming to have access to the whole of the house straight away. Most cats will let you know when they are ready to venture further and it very much depends on your cat's individual character. However, when you let them see the rest of the house, make sure that all doors, windows and cat flaps are closed as they're not ready for the outside world yet! Make sure they always have access to their 'safe room' in case they feel the need to retreat.

Going outside

Your cat should be kept indoors for at least three weeks. This allows them time to regard the new house as a secure place and to build up a scent profile to help them find their way back. It's important that your cat feels relaxed and secure in their new house before venturing outdoors. Some cats go missing shortly after moving house because owners have let their cats go outside too soon. These cats sometimes find their way back to their old houses.

Before letting your cat out, make sure they are microchipped to help them be reunited with you if they wander too far. If they are already microchipped, don't forget to change your address details on the microchipping database when you move. Microchipping is now compulsory for all cats aged over 20 weeks in England. For more information see cats.org.uk/microchipping

When you do let them out:

- let them out in the morning or early afternoon, as cats are more likely to venture further at dusk
- do it just before a mealtime when they are hungry so you can call them back with their favourite food
- open the door and step outside encouraging your cat to go with you
- don't pick them up. Let them make the decision to go outside themselves
- leave the door open so they can run back into the house if they feel insecure
- only let them out for short periods at first. You can gradually build up the time they are out until you are confident they can come and go as they please

Don't forget to register with a new vet, who will request your cat's veterinary history from your previous practice. If your cat has existing health issues, you may wish to organise this before you move.

Cats and holidays

Taking cats on holiday is not advisable. Cats are generally very stressed by travelling and become disorientated in a new environment. It is better to find a reliable cat sitter or use a cattery.

Foreign travel and bringing cats to the UK

If you're moving to a different country, you'll need to make sure you plan carefully to ensure your cat travels safely. For individual country requirements, or re-entry to the UK, check the government website at [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk)

- Research the area you are moving to
- Check whether there are different parasites or disease risks, and additional healthcare needed to protect your cat
- Find a vet in your new local area
- Check whether your pet insurance is valid once outside of the UK

Update your microchip details!

Whether moving one mile or 1,000 it is vital to update the details stored on your cat's microchip with your contact details for the country you are in. To do this you will need to contact the database that your cat's microchip is registered with. You will have received details of the database at the time your cat was microchipped. If you are unsure which database to contact, in the UK you can search using the 'check a chip' service found at [identibase.co.uk](https://www.identibase.co.uk)

Your cat's record will **not automatically update, so it is important that you remember to do this.** Your cat may face a further period in quarantine or even euthanasia by the authorities if they become lost, you cannot be traced and their legal entry to the UK cannot be confirmed. For your own records also, keep your cat's unique microchip number safe.

The following vet-approved guides are available to download from cats.org.uk/information-leaflets

Essential guides

- Behaviour: Understanding your cat's behaviour** W84009
- Behaviour: Managing your cat's behaviour** W84010
- Bringing your cat home** W84002
- Caring for your cat** W84001
- Caring for your kitten** W84015
- Cats and people** W84014
- Cats living together** W84011
- Elderly cats** W84016
- End-of-life, grief and loss** W84007
- Feeding and obesity** W84004
- Feral cats** W84017
- Indoor and outdoor cats** W84012
- Keeping your cat safe** W84005
- Microchipping** W84008
- Moving home** W84003
- Neutering** W84006
- Pregnant cats, birth and care of young kittens** W84018

Veterinary guides

- Arthritis** W83201
- Cat flu** W83216
- Digestive disorders: vomiting and diarrhoea** W83218
- Feline immunodeficiency virus (FIV) and feline leukaemia virus (FeLV)** W83209
- Feline lower urinary tract disease (FLUTD)** W83202
- Fleas and other parasites** W83215
- Heart murmurs and heart disease** W83211
- Hyperthyroidism** W83212
- Infectious disease and vaccination** W83217
- Kidney or renal disease** W83206
- Skin disorders** W83204
- Teeth and oral health** W83214

Please see cats.org.uk for more information on:

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| Cats and pregnant women: toxoplasmosis | Feline coronavirus (FCoV) and feline infectious peritonitis (FIP) |
| Cats and the law | Feline parvovirus (FPV) |
| Cats with disabilities | Hypertension |
| Diabetes | You and your vet |
| Feline asthma | |

For more information about Cats Protection or to find out how you can support us, go to **cats.org.uk**



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