



FOSTERING WITH WAGGYTAIL RESCUE

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🐾 ABOUT US 🐾

Waggytail Rescue is a NYS registered 501(c)3 non-profit organization, founded in 2004 by Holly DeRito.

As a volunteer-based rescue, we're paid in puppy kisses and smiles, and that's just fine with us! We juggle this labor of love with our day jobs because it's so worth it when we see our animals settle down in their forever homes.

Since we don't have a physical location, fosters are critical to the mission of our rescue. Without the commitment of fosters—parents who temporarily house and take care of our rescues until they can find those forever homes—it would be impossible for us to do what we do.

Our team at Waggytail Rescue thank you so much for opening your hearts and homes to animals in need and helping us save lives!



OPERATIONS

Below is a quick breakdown of how we operate as a rescue.

SOURCE

Most of our intakes come from shelters in the South. We also accept animals from NYC Animal Care and Control, owner-surrendered pets, or strays. We know very little about these animals until they've settled down into our foster homes. Most animals are vetted prior to foster placement.



FOSTER

Foster homes are very crucial to our mission. We know that fosters take a slight risk in opening their homes to an animal in need without knowing everything about them first. We count on fosters to learn about the pet's personality, likes/dislikes, quirks, issues, and more so that we can find the most suitable adopter for them.



ADOPTION

After the foster pet has spent some time at their foster home, we will make their profile public on our website and other pet adoption sites. Waggy contacts will review adoption applications together with fosters and decide on the best candidates. After the application is approved, a meet and greet will be scheduled for the applicant to meet the pet and ask the foster any questions that they may have. If all goes well and both parties agree it's a good match, the adopter can take their pet home after they have submitted the transfer agreement and the adoption fee.



POST-ADOPTION

Celebrate! You've done a fantastic job providing a temporary home for your foster pet! You can stay in touch with the adopter as long as you have their consent to do so. If the adopter reaches out to you about a medical or behavior issue, please redirect them to Waggytail Rescue at waggyadopt@gmail.com. Our goal is to keep the pet in their home, so we're happy to provide any kind of support even post-adoption.



FOSTER GUIDELINES

1. Vet visits **MUST** be authorized by a Waggy contact. You will be responsible for the bills if we aren't aware of the visit.
2. All foster dogs **MUST** be securely leashed while outside. Foster cats are **NOT ALLOWED** outside.
3. Dog parks are **NOT ALLOWED**. For socialization, we recommend looking for a dog whom you can trust (up to date on shots and dog-friendly). This can be a friend's dog, a neighbor's dog, or even another foster dog who lives in the same area.
4. Only let your foster pet go home **AFTER** we've received the transfer agreement and adoption fee.
5. Waggytail foster pets must be the **ONLY** foster pet in the home unless you are approved to take home another foster pet from a different agency. We have the rights to remove the foster pet from you without your consent.
6. Do not promise your dog to a friend for adoption. All apps **MUST** go through Waggytail Rescue.



GETTING STARTED

If you haven't already, please join “**Waggytail Rescue Fosters and Volunteers**” group on Facebook. This is where we share general information, advice, training tips/workshops, and also supplies. Feel free to connect with other fosters and ask questions. We're all here to help you during your fostering journey.

After a foster pet is assigned to you, it's time to **gather supplies** (see next page for a list of essential supplies). We can provide some limited supplies of donated items, but there may be a financial cost to you in fostering. All supplies that you purchase for your foster pet can be considered as *tax-deductible donations*. Waggytail Rescue may be able to provide reimbursement for some minor expenses (keep your receipts) but keep in mind we operate on a very tight budget to rescue and rehabilitate as many animals as possible. Any supplies provided to you must stay within the Waggytail network and should not go with the adopted pet.

Before you bring your foster pet home, **prepare an enclosed area** in your house with their essential supplies so they can relax and decompress. For dogs, you can use a crate, a playpen, or a gate to section off a small room like a kitchen. For cats, a small room like your bathroom or office will be best. Your bedroom should work as well if there isn't any hiding space.

IMPORTANT

Before you bring your foster pet home, you should've been introduced to your **Waggy contact** via email or phone. Your Waggy contact is your go-to for any questions or concerns. If there are urgent requests/emergencies and your Waggy contact isn't available, email **waggyvolunteer@gmail.com** so someone else can assist you.

SUPPLIES

DOGS

- **Food:** Any high-quality food is recommended, depending on your budget. You will be notified if your foster requires wet food for medical reasons.
- **Food and water bowls:** Any adequately sized metal, plastic or ceramic bowl will suffice.
- **A collar, harness, and leash,** plus cold-weather gear if seasonally appropriate.
- **A bed:** In a pinch, this can be an old pillow or blanket.
- **Poop bags:** Please be a responsible dog walker!
- **Treats:** Help with both bonding and training.
- **Toys:** Keep them active and entertained.
- **Carrier:** Always transport your foster animal in a carrier. Contact us in advance if you need to borrow one.
- **Wee wee pads:** Necessary for bottle babies, kittens, puppies and older dogs.
- **Crate, play pen, or gate:** Appropriately sized, restricting the amount of space to initially explore allows pets to feel secure in their environment, and helps with housetraining and separation anxiety.

CATS

- **Food:** Any high-quality food is recommended, depending on your budget. You will be notified if your foster requires wet food for medical reasons.
- **Food and water bowls:** Any adequately sized metal, plastic or ceramic bowl will suffice.
- **A litter box and litter:** Must be accessible for your cat depending on their size.
- **A bed:** In a pinch, this can be an old pillow or blanket.
- **Treats:** Help with both bonding and training.
- **Toys:** Keep them active and entertained.
- **Carrier:** Always transport your foster animal in a carrier. Contact us in advance if you need to borrow one.

If your foster pet is coming from a transport, you will most likely receive a Waggy Baggy with some essential supplies. A typical Waggy baggy will include: dewormer, a small bottle of Dawn dish soap (for the potential treatment of fleas), a roll of poop bags, a toy, treats, and wee wee pads for puppies. Depending on donations, we can also include kibble if needed and capstar (flea pill, but Dawn dish soap will suffice).

FIRST DAY

While it may seem counterintuitive, one of the best things you can do for a nervous animal in their new environment is to **restrict the amount of room** they have to explore, and resist the urge to try to interact or soothe them. Speak softly and drop treats while you go about your normal routine, but don't force interaction until they are comfortable and come to you. Familiarize yourself with common signs of stress, and give them the necessary time and space they need to settle in.

If you have your own pet, we strongly suggest keeping your new foster pet in a **separate area**. This allows your foster pet to acclimate to the new environment without the stress of having other animals around, acts as a quarantine for common infectious diseases such as URI (Upper Respiratory Infection), and allows for controlled introductions to the resident pets. For cats, you can set up a base camp in your bathroom or office with all of their essential supplies.

Your foster pet **may not eat** for a day or two at first, but can often be coaxed with unseasoned boiled chicken, plain yogurt, or canned pureed pumpkin (not pie filling). Put away uneaten food and don't leave food out so they can learn their new feeding schedule and see you as a positive reinforcement (food!). Always have plenty of clean water readily available.

Your foster pet may have a few **potty accidents** until they've settled into their new routine. In these early days, we suggest rolling up rugs and removing precious soft furnishings. It's normal for your foster pet to initially refuse to go to the bathroom, but positive reinforcement of good habits helps a formerly trained pet remember where and when it is appropriate to go. Patience is key! More helpful information about potty training an adult dog or cat can be provided upon request.

After your foster pet relaxes a bit—if they are not too anxious—**bathe them** for additional flea treatment. They often feel so much better after a bath! You can use your own pet shampoo, or any kind of dish soap.

DAILY ROUTINE CHECKLIST

- Food & Water** - Your foster pet should be fed at least twice a day. Puppies and kittens should be fed as much as they want to eat. Water should be available at all times. If your foster pet doesn't drink water from a bowl, a water fountain usually helps. You can also add water to their food to make sure they stay hydrated.
- Exercise** - The most common cause of behavior issues is boredom. Your foster dog should be walked at least 3 times a day. For foster pets that can't go outside (cats, kittens and puppies), use interactive toys to release their energy. Puzzle toys are recommended for mental stimulation. You can also make them work for treats!
- Socialize** - Expose your foster pets to new objects, sights, sounds, smells, humans, and other animals. Invite friends over and let them spend time with your foster pet to create a positive interaction. Many of our rescue animals come from the streets or a hoarding case so they need to learn how to be a housepet. Contact us for resources if your foster pet needs intensive socialization training or shows signs of social anxiety.
- Sleep** - Your foster pet should be tired enough to sleep through the night. If they seem restless, they could possibly be sick or just need more exercise during the day, please contact us if this is an issue.
- Love** - Last but not least... remember to give your foster pet lots of love every day! Pet them, give belly rubs if they ask for them, talk to them in a calm voice, praise them when they do what you want.

A FOSTER'S ROLE IN ADOPTION

As the main caregiver for your foster pet, you are the best person to determine whether a potential adopter is a good fit for your particular pet's unique personality. We ask all fosters to take a leading role in the adoption process. Below is an overview of our adoption process and the importance of fosters.

STEP 1: ADVERTISE YOUR FOSTER PET

With thousands of homeless animals in NYC, we try our best to get your foster pets seen by potential adopters. After a few days of decompression, please send us a bio, pictures and videos of your foster pet so we can make their profile public on our website. If you post your foster pet on social media, don't forget to tag us @waggytailrescue so that we can repost!

STEP 2: APPLICATION REVIEW & APPROVAL

Applications are reviewed by Waggytail operations including landlord approval, vet reference (if applicable), personal references, and a virtual homecheck. **Although an applicant may be approved to adopt from Waggytail, it does not necessarily mean they are the best match for the pet you're currently fostering.** The foster parent should review the application thoroughly as they know the foster pet best. When an application is approved, your Waggy contact will send an email approval to you and the adopter. Then, you are responsible for arranging a meet-and-greet with all members of the potential family (including any dogs in the house!). Be open and honest about your foster pet and answer any questions they may have. Keep in contact with us during this process to let us know how things are progressing and to ask for any advice.

STEP 3: THE MEET & GREET

For **DOGS**:

- Pick a location to meet where your foster is most comfortable so that their true personality shines. Typically, the potential adopters come to you.
- Allow your foster dog to express their authentic personality, quirks, traits and natural behaviors.
- Have a secure and well-fitted harness or martingale collar on your foster. Most accidents/escapes occur during these physical transfers.
- Since this is most likely the first time the adopter and their family will be interacting with your foster dog, try to schedule a meet & greet that leaves ample time for everyone to get to know each other - at least half an hour.
- If the adopter is bringing another dog to meet your foster, an outside meeting on neutral territory like a quiet side street or a park is best. Walk them side-by-side first before letting them say hello.
- If your foster dog is nervous or shy, keep the focus off the dog for the first few minutes and just start walking.
- After a few minutes of talking about the dog's personality and habits, hand the leash off to the adopter, and keep walking. If your foster dog has become attached to you, just keep walking with them until you can splinter off and meet them back in front of wherever you started. This gives the adopter time to get acquainted with the dog and gain a more thorough understanding of the personality and current level of training.
- Allow your foster dog to be themselves.
- If there are known allergies, try to get your foster dog to lick (kiss) the potential adopter's hand or arm and allow all humans to pet the dog. Use peanut butter if your foster is not big on kissing. Let your adopter know that allergens live in a dog's dander and saliva and it may take several hours for symptoms to surface in humans.

For **CATS**:

- Prepare a quiet room with your foster cat's favorite toys and treats. If possible, separate your foster cat from your resident pets.
- If your foster cat is shy and tends to hide away from new people, put the cat in a room with no hiding space, or a crate. If your foster cat doesn't come out at all during the meet-and-greet, be proactive and show the adopter pictures and videos of the cat interacting with you. A follow-up video call is also a good idea.
- Let the adopter interact with the cat using toys and treats.
- Be honest about your foster cat's personality, what they like/dislike, and share any challenges that the adopter should know about.

Did it go well? If yes, proceed to **STEP 4**.

IMPORTANT: If you are not comfortable following through with the adoption based on how the meet-and-greet went, follow your instincts and politely let the adopter know that Waggytail Rescue will follow up with the decision. The goal is to minimize the potential for animals being returned, and for you to be as confident as possible that the potential adopter and your foster pet are a good match. This can be a difficult decision, so please be honest with us so we can communicate professionally with the adopter in the event that we don't believe that this exact match is the right fit for both parties.

STEP 4: TRANSFER AGREEMENT & FEE

It is possible for the adopters to adopt their pet the same day as the meet-and-greet, but it is also common for the adopter to need a day to make a final decision and prepare for their pet's arrival. We don't typically hold dogs for longer than 24 hours, so if another application is received and approved 24 hours after a meet & greet (while a previous adopter is still deciding) the pet may be adopted out to the other party. We do not accommodate trial adoptions. Adoption fees are non-negotiable and non-refundable.

Visit the “Adopt” tab on our website for details. ONLY let your foster pet go after your adopter has completed the transfer agreement and paid the adoption fee. They can show you the receipt, or one of Waggytail core members can confirm.

Please give the documentation and tags that came with the animal, plus vet records or medical treatment received while in foster care, to the adopter. The adopter is responsible for supplying all necessary items for their new pet from this point on. You are not obliged to provide the adopter with anything you have purchased for your foster pet, however, if you would like to give a favorite toy or blanket you are welcome to do so!

STEP 5: SAY GOODBYE TO YOUR FOSTER PET

It is almost time to say goodbye to your foster pet and you may feel conflicted. Do your best to hide these feelings from your foster pet and say a calm/brief goodbye. A short, undramatic goodbye sets the pet up for success when separated from you to thrive in their forever home. Be gentle with yourself and focus on the exciting new life your foster pet is about to have. Be proud for helping them find a family!

We hope that fostering is a positive and rewarding experience for you and that you continue to foster with Waggytail Rescue. Once approved to foster, you do not need to re-apply each time you foster, but let us know if your housing situation changes so we can re-confirm the pet policy with your new landlord and file your new address.



COMMON MEDICAL ISSUES



**VET VISITS MUST BE APPROVED
BY A WAGGY CONTACT AND FOSTERS
MUST VISIT ONE OF OUR PARTNER VETS IN
CHELSEA, EAST VILLAGE OR PARK SLOPE.**

Most foster pets have had an initial health assessment by a qualified veterinarian. Below are a few common medical issues that we come across very often and are usually caused by stress or change in environment. **Please let your Waggy contact know right away** if anything seems off or if you think that your foster animal may need to see a vet. Fosters are responsible for the cost if they take their foster pets to a vet without Waggytail's approval.

Soft Stool or Diarrhea: It is normal for foster pets to have soft stool during the first few days while transitioning to a new food. If it persists for longer than a few days, add some canned pumpkin to your foster pet's meal depending on their size. Notify us immediately if your foster pet has diarrhea, as it can be fatal to puppies and kittens.

Worms: Although the majority of pets have already been dewormed, it can often take a second dose to completely kill intestinal parasites. If you see worms in your foster pet's stool or if they have soft stool, don't panic! **Worms don't require a vet visit.** De-wormers can be purchased over the counter at most pet stores. Contact us to see if we have any donated medication on hand, or to be reimbursed, if necessary.

COMMON MEDICAL ISSUES

URI, Upper Respiratory Infection: It is very common for shelter animals to have a cold for the first few days, which can last up to two weeks. URI is also known as kennel cough, which is characterized by a honking or choking cough and may be accompanied by runny eyes and nose, plus sneezing. Cats may have swollen eyes, known as conjunctivitis. Symptoms usually clear within a week and can be eased by providing wet food or softened kibble (soaked in water), plentiful water, and using a humidifier. Steam from the bathroom also helps break up the congestion in their sinuses and lungs. If symptoms do not resolve or seem to be getting worse, contact us for medications or to arrange a vet visit.

Low Energy: Some foster pets need a few days to decompress and can appear to be low-energy. If they become lethargic or don't perk up after a few days, they may need a vet visit.

Loss of Appetite: The stress from transport or change of environment can cause a loss of appetite. Most of the time, you can coax your foster pet to eat with some deli meat, or boiled chicken. Canned sardines or tuna in tomato sauce are safe for cats and a small amount can be mixed into their food.

Home remedies are welcome and some **over-the-counter medicines** can be used in some cases with the right dosage. Please always check with us beforehand to make sure they are safe for animals.

HOW TO BE AN EFFECTIVE FOSTER

BE PATIENT

Rescue animals come from various backgrounds and it is stressful for them to be placed in a new environment. Some adapt quickly, some may take a few days to open up (in some cases, weeks). Some may have accidents, some may decide to hide—whatever they do, it is important to be patient while they are learning about their new life and routine.

BASIC TRAINING

Basic training is essential! It helps create a relationship between you and your animal and also helps them build up their confidence levels. Basic training includes, but is not limited to, socializing (exposing them to new people), desensitizing (exposing them to new things), and learning simple commands. Fosters are not required to train their foster pets, but having some basic training usually sets them up for success.

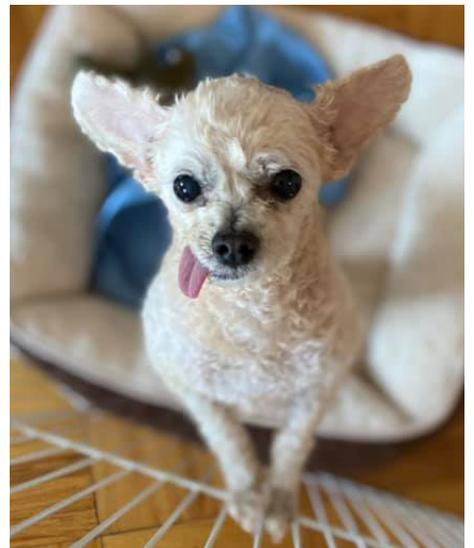
GOOD PHOTOS

First impressions are important—you don't want adopters to scroll past your foster pet because of bad photos! Be sure to capture silly moments and take candid shots in good lighting. The pet should also be in focus (not blurry). You may want to use treats or toys in order to get them to look at the camera. If your foster pet doesn't want to cooperate, ask a friend for some assistance.

PROMOTE

Waggytail will be in charge of promoting your foster pet on our social media and pet adoption websites, but any extra exposure doesn't hurt. We encourage you to post photos and videos of your foster pet on social media and tag us **@WaggytailRescue** so we can re-post. Local Facebook groups and NextDoor are also great places to get the word out. We also often host virtual adoption events that you and your foster pet can attend.

EXAMPLES OF GOOD PHOTOS



FAQ

Q: Why foster?

A: Taking a scared and confused animal out of the shelter system and into a loving, private home gives them the opportunity to relax, recover and become the best version of themselves before adoption. Fostering dogs or cats that do not respond well to being in a shelter greatly increases their chance of adoption and avoids unnecessary euthanasia.

By volunteering your time, energy and patience as a foster parent, you can help put an animal on the path towards a long and happy life in their forever home.

Q: How long does fostering last?

A: This is a hard question to answer as some foster pets get adopted very quickly while others take a while to get ready or to catch the eye of their future adopter. Generally, you can expect to foster for anywhere from 2 weeks to a month, but it may be longer. We ask that foster parents commit to their foster pet until they are adopted as it can be stressful for a foster pet to move from home to home. However, with adequate notice, we will, of course, arrange alternative foster care if your circumstances do not allow you to continue caring for your foster pet

Q: What if I want to adopt my foster?

A: We love it when this happens! Please fill in an adoption application, sign an Adoption (Transfer) Agreement and pay the appropriate adoption fee for the animal.

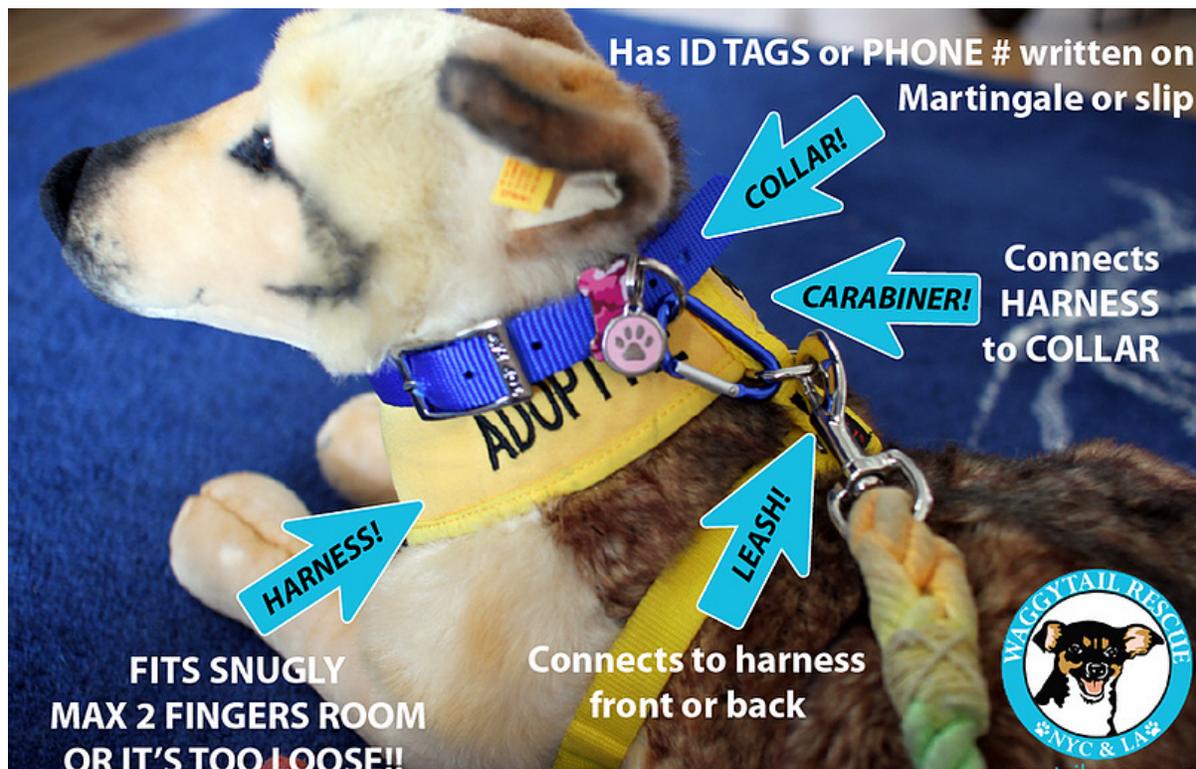
Q: Why can't I just take my foster to the vet?

A: Vet visits are expensive. Instead of spending \$100 on a cold that may just go away on its own, we can save that money towards a surgery for another animal. We deal with sick animals on a daily basis so we ask you to trust our expertise. We will authorize a vet visit if it's necessary.

USEFUL LINKS & HANDOUTS

Waggytail Training Resources: waggytailrescue.org/Training

Please reach out to your Waggy contact if you need training assistance.





USEFUL LINKS & HANDOUTS




CRATE TRAINING

The right way!



Key benefits

- A crate can offer your dog a safe zone during stressful times, like travel or visits to the vet.
- Crate training helps to housetrain your puppy in less time

Don't
Don't leave me in my crate for a long period without exercise.

Don't
Don't forget to take me out for potty breaks!
(Every 2-3 hours during the day)

Don't
Don't disturb me when I'm in my crate. And don't allow anyone in my crate. It's my safe zone!

Don't
Put me in my crate as a punishment.

Make sure your crate is big enough for your dog. He should be able to stand up, lie down and turn around comfortably!



How to start



- 1 Leave the crate door open and throw some snacks into his crate. He will pick up on this and will move onto his crate. When he gets into his crate, praise him but don't close the door yet.
- 2 When your pup voluntarily goes onto the bench, close the door for a few seconds. If he's calm, offer him a treat in his crate and praise him! Yay! Now open the door.
- 3 Slowly build time: 10 seconds, 30 seconds, one minute, and up to 30 minutes.
- 4 If everything is going nicely, try to leave your dog in his crate while you're in another room.

If you experience any problems, you are probably moving too fast. Take a step back and take your time. No rush. Your dog will love his crate if you teach it the right way.



Download your free training course: 'The Puppy Basics' on puppytalesstudio.com

USEFUL LINKS & HANDOUTS

How to Train Your Dog in 7 Days?



WHEN TO START POTTY TRAINING?

Potty Training should start when your pup is 12 to 16 weeks old.

By that age, the dog will have enough control over its bladder and bowel.



7 DAYS POTTY TRAINING CHALLENGE

DAY 1

Establish a consistent feeding schedule. Be wary of your dog's dietary requirements. Pups need to eat 3 or 4 times a day, and pee almost every other hour.



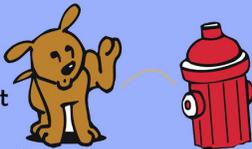
DAY 2

Establish a consistent "Potty Break." Stick to the fixed schedule of feeding and potty break that you'll be able to follow even later. Take them to the loo first thing in the morning and just before bedtime.



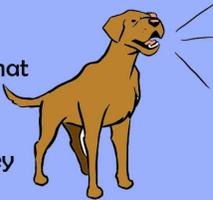
DAY 3

Get them accustomed to relieving in the same location. Pinpoint an exact location and take your directly from the house to the "Potty Spot." No strolling around.



DAY 4

Learn and adapt to signs that your dog has to go. By learning signs, you can rush them outside whenever they exhibit certain behavior.



DAY 5

Continue with the schedule and punish them when they break the rule. Your dog will somewhat get used to the schedule. When they accidentally poo or pee inside the house, clap loudly and direct them outside the house to the spot immediately.



DAY 6

Check your dog's status. By this time, your dog will get used to going outside. They'll either signal you or you'll be able to pick up their signs.



DAY 7

Reinforce weak areas. Maintain strict schedules such as playtime only after the loo, potty break only in a stipulated time, direct commute from the house to potty spot, etc.



USEFUL LINKS & HANDOUTS

DOGGIE LANGUAGE

starring Boogie the Boston Terrier



ALERT



SUSPICIOUS



ANXIOUS



THREATENED



ANGRY



"PEACE!"
look away/head turn



STRESSED
yawn



STRESSED
nose lick



"PEACE!"
sniff ground



"RESPECT!"
turn & walk away



"NEED SPACE"
whale eye



STALKING



STRESSED
scratching



STRESS RELEASE
shake off



RELAXED
soft ears, blinky eyes



"RESPECT!"
offer his back



FRIENDLY & POLITE
curved body



FRIENDLY



"PRETTY PLEASE"
round puppy face



"I'M YOUR LOVEBUG"
belly-rub pose



"HELLO I LOVE YOU!"
greeting stretch



"I'M FRIENDLY!"
play bow



"READY!"
prey bow



"YOU WILL FEED ME"



CURIOUS
head tilt



HAPPY
(or hot)



OVERJOYED
wiggly



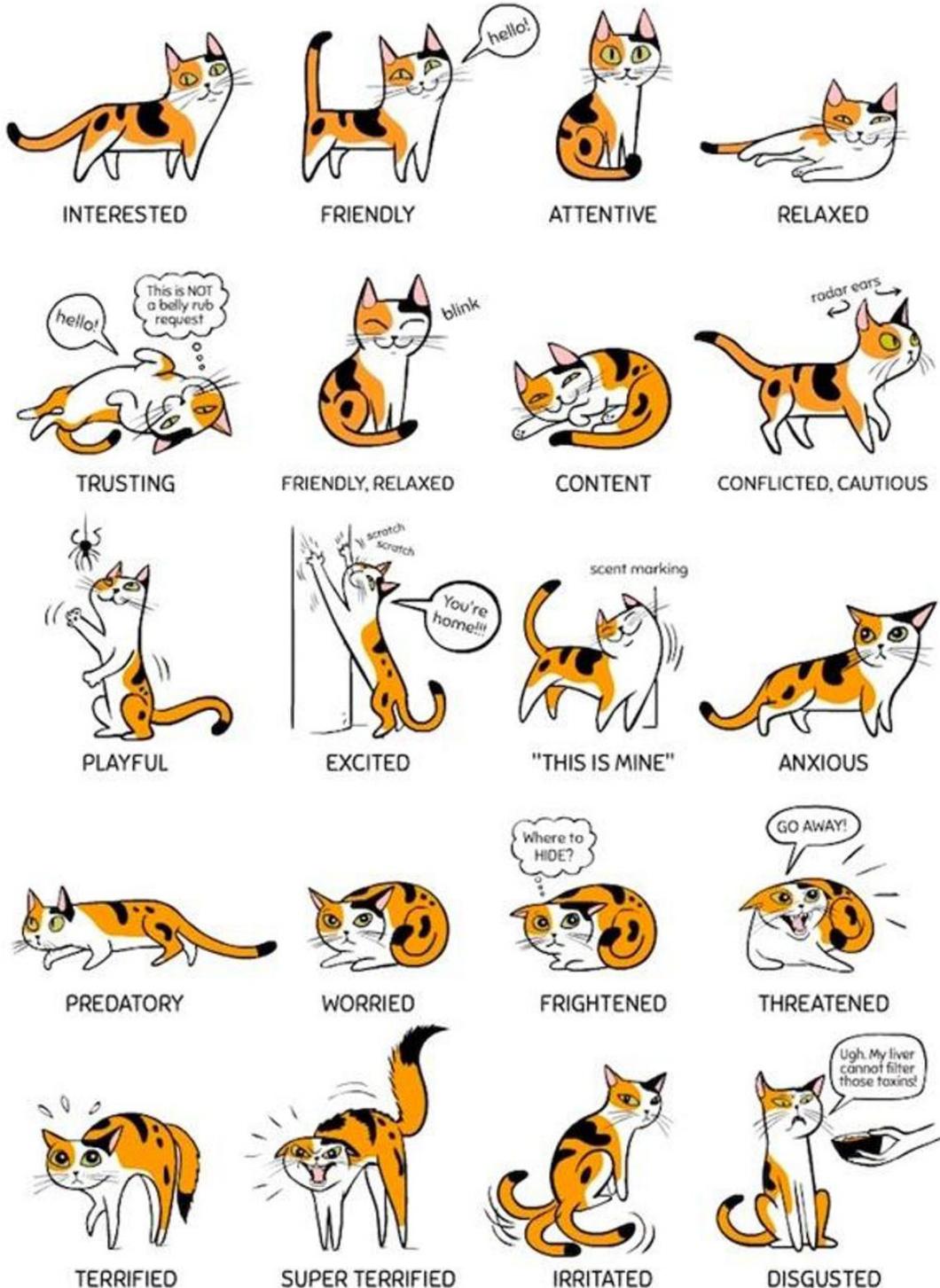
"MMMM...."



"I LOVE YOU,
DON'T STOP"

USEFUL LINKS & HANDOUTS

CAT LANGUAGE



USEFUL LINKS & HANDOUTS



Tabitha Kucera CCBC, RVT, KPA-CTP

Chirrupsandchatter.com

Chirrup and Chatters offers comprehensive behavior solutions, cat training, and educational lectures and workshops for animal professionals

LITTERBOX LESSONS

ABC'S OF LITTERBOXES



A = ACCESSIBLE

- Make sure litterboxes are easily accessible
- Have plenty of litterboxes; a good rule is that the minimum # of litterboxes = # of cats +1 (2 cats = 3 boxes) *Keep in mind, 3 litterboxes right next to each other is one box from a cat's perspective.
- Place litterboxes throughout the home including all levels of a multilevel home
 - Many cats prefer to defecate in one box and urinate in another
 - If a cat, dog, or human is blocking the pathway (purposefully or accidentally) the cats should have another option available.
 - Older cats and cats with medical issues that cause them to go the bathroom frequently require easy access to a litterbox



B = BIG

- Make sure that the litterboxes are big enough to comfortably accommodate your cat:
 - Litterboxes should be 1.5 times the length of your cat and your cat should be able to turn around in it - You wouldn't want to use an airplane sized bathroom and neither does your cat.
- Jumbo sized litterboxes or plastic, under the bed type storage containers often make good box options for adult cats and multi-cat households; uncovered boxes are strongly recommended.
- See below for more suggestions



C = CLEAN

- Keep the boxes clean
- Scoop the litterboxes daily
- Dump and wash the litterboxes with a mild soap every 4-6 weeks. Avoid strong aversive cleaning agents like bleach
- Clumping Clay: Offer clumping clay litter
 - Most cats prefer clumping clay (sand-like) litter over other types of litter
 - Most cats prefer unscented and low dust, dust free litter
 - Let your cat choose which litter they prefer. If your cat prefers a specific litter, do not change it.

USEFUL LINKS & HANDOUTS



Tabitha Kucera CCBC, RVT, KPA-CTP

Chirrupsandchatter.com

Chirrup and Chatters offers education lectures, workshops, and behavior consulting to shelters.

PLAYING WITH YOUR CAT

Exercising your cats prey drive with interactive and solo play is a crucial part of your cat's development and contributes greatly to their quality of life. It provides exercise and mental and physical stimulation. It also allows your cat to express their natural behavior and provides predatory outlets, reduces boredom, helps with weight management, and bonds you and your cat closer to each other.

REMEMBER TO ALWAYS PROVIDE YOUR CATS WITH VARIETY AND CHOICE AND SEE WHAT THEY LIKE BEST.

TYPES OF PLAY

SOLO PLAY: This includes toys your cat can play with on their own. Also, providing your cat with toys they can play with on their own is recommended, everything from ping pong balls, motorized toys and catnip kicker toys, which are great for cats to attack, bunny kick, and snuggle with. Toy rotation is a simple idea that will keep your cat more interested in playing and prevent boredom. A few of my favorite motorized toys are PetFusion ambush interactive electric cattytoy, SmartyKat electronic motion cat toy, and FroliCat pounce automatic catteaser

INTERACTIVE PLAY (social with humans): This is when you are playing with your cat. There are various ways to play a part in your cat's play including scheduled playtimes, impromptu play times, clicker training, and playing fetch with your cat. Some of my favorite wand toys are Da Bird, Go Cat Da Bird, Neko Flies toys, and the Cat Dancer toy. When it comes to play sessions with your cat, there are important do's and don'ts which is listed below.

EXPLORE, SEARCH, FORAGE PLAY: This includes environmental enrichment which allows the cat to perch, hide, search, and forage. See enrichment handout for more!

IT IS IMPORTANT TO PROVIDE VARIOUS OPPORTUNITIES AND CHOICES FOR ALL TYPES OF PLAY.

ALWAYS

- **SIMULATE PREY:** When using an interactive toy such as a feather wand or a mouse on a string, move the toy like the prey it's supposed to represent. When birds aren't flying, for example, they hop around on the ground and then flutter off to land somewhere else. Mice and other rodents scurry with sudden starts and stops, keeping to corners and hidden places. If you're really serious about learning to play like prey, watch them at work in your yard or study videos of their behavior.
- **USE A WAND TOY** to play with your cat, avoid using your hands so your cats learn appropriate play.

NEVER

- **TOUCH/PET YOUR CAT** when you are playing with him
- **PLAY USING YOUR HANDS, feet, or any body part** as a toy
- **DANGLE ITEMS** of clothing as play objects
- **WRESTLE** with your cat
- **TEASE** a cat with a toy but never let them catch and bite it

USEFUL LINKS & HANDOUTS



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Chirrupsandchatter.com

Chirrup and Chatters offers education lectures, workshops, and behavior consulting to shelters.

FEARFUL KITTEN SOCIALIZATION 101

THESE RECOMMENDATIONS AND TECHNIQUES CAN ALSO BE USED TO HELP FEARFUL ADULT CATS

CREATE A SANCTUARY ROOM/COMFORTABLE ENVIRONMENT

- Separate room away from other pets
- Kitten proofing (covering up vents, clearing shelves, using an appropriately sized cage, etc)
- Hiding spaces- Provide plenty of safe hiding places so the kitten(s) don't need to hide under the bed and in corners where they may get hurt and you can't see them. Safe hiding places can be paper bags without handles, cat carriers, boxes, shoeboxes, tunnels, and more.
- Calm environment- To create a scent friendly environment, you can plug in a feliway diffuser. Do not change linens unless they are dirty. Keep your scents to a minimum when interacting with the kitten (cig smoke, cats, dogs, perfume)
- High places - Cats have an instinctual need to see things from up high, a behavior that is rooted in the fact that cats are both small predators and prey. High places can be cat trees or the top of a carrier.
- Litter boxes – Litterboxes should be low so the kitten can easily enter and leave, can mix in soil with litter to help kitten adjust although many kittens will use the litterbox. Using the litterbox is instinct, cats do not need to be trained to use the box. If they are missing the box, it's most likely not accessible, they do not like substrate, or because of medical issues. Avoid using pellet litter, this is not natural and not setting up the kittens for success. Most caregivers do not use this litter and most cats do not prefer it due to it being hard, unnatural, and not comfortable on their paws. If kitten has wounds, use shredded paper not yesterday's news.
- Kittens need to scratch (various vertical and horizontal scratchers- different scratching substrates)
- Limit the amount you turn lights on and off- Light is an environmental cue that allows confined cats to become accustomed to daily activities. Lights need to be controlled by a timer that provides a predictable light-dark cycle from day to day if natural light cannot be provided. If a timer is not possible, then turn lights on and off manually at the same time each day.
- Bedding (soft blankets, beds, resting places)
- Heated cat beds
- Calming Music: Through a Cats Ear, Pet Acoustics Pet Tunes Feline speaker. Avoid playing the radio or the news since what plays is uncontrolled and can cause stress.
- Add enrichment that stimulates all 5 senses (see enrichment handout)

