

The Complete Guide to Raising a Cat for First-Time Owners
Care, Feeding, Behavior, Health, and Training for a Happy Indoor Cat

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Happy Paws Publishing

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Part 1: Home & Environment

Chapter 1: Your Cat's First Week at Home

Welcome to life with your new cat.

This guide will help you create a happy, stress-free life together. In this first chapter, we'll focus on the most important period of all—the first week after your cat arrives.

How you handle this week can shape your relationship for years to come. Take it slow, follow your cat's pace, and you'll build a strong foundation of trust.

Today's Key Point

During the first week, your priority is simple:

Help your cat feel safe and adjust to the new environment.

Do not force interaction.

Prepare a quiet hiding place and essential supplies.

Let your cat come to you when they are ready.

Trust takes time—be patient.

Why Cats Struggle in a New Home

It's completely normal for a cat to feel anxious at first.

Here are the main reasons:

- **Territorial instincts**

Cats are sensitive to unfamiliar places, smells, and layouts.

- **Natural caution**

New people and animals can feel threatening.

- **Past experiences**

Rescue cats or rehomed cats may need extra time.

- **New sounds and smells**

Household noises, appliances, and daily activity can be overwhelming.

- **Different routines**

Your schedule may not match what the cat is used to.

Because of this stress, many cats hide.

Trying to pull them out or force contact can increase their fear.

What to Do: Step-by-Step

1. Prepare Before Arrival

Set up a safe space:

- A **secure hiding place** (crate, carrier, or cardboard box)
- Food and water bowls
- Litter box
- Scratching post
- Bed or soft blanket

Also:

- Remove hazards (cords, chemicals, small objects)
- Close escape routes (doors, windows)
- Choose a quiet, low-traffic room

Your goal: a calm, predictable environment.

2. The First Day

Keep everything calm and quiet.

- Avoid loud voices or excitement
- Place the cat in the prepared space or carrier
- Speak softly and gently
- Let the cat come out on their own
- Do **not** force touching or holding
- Keep food and water easily accessible

Simple reassurance like

“Hi, it’s okay. You’re safe here.”

can help your cat adjust to your voice.

3. The First Few Days

Be patient and observant.

- If the cat hides, **leave them alone**
- Place an item with your scent (like a worn T-shirt) nearby
- Talk softly when you’re in the room
- Use toys to encourage gentle interaction
- Guide them to the litter box if they seem to be searching
- If the cat approaches you, pet gently—start with the head or chin

Let the cat control the pace.

4. After One Week

As your cat relaxes:

- Allow supervised exploration of more areas
- Increase playtime and interaction
- Introduce brushing if tolerated
- Keep routines consistent

Some cats adjust quickly.

Others may take weeks. Both are normal.

Weekly Checklist

Make sure your cat is:

- Eating regularly
- Using the litter box
- Sleeping comfortably
- Showing curiosity or exploration
- Breathing normally
- Free from vomiting or diarrhea
- Not crying excessively

If anything seems unusual, consult a veterinarian.

Common Mistakes to Avoid

- Forcing interaction or holding
- Loud noises or sudden movements
- Touching when the cat shows fear
- Introducing other pets too quickly
- Frequently rearranging furniture
- Changing food abruptly
- Leaving doors or windows unsecured
- Ignoring the cat completely
- Expecting fast adjustment

The biggest mistake? **Rushing.**

One-Minute Summary

The first week is critical for building trust.

Provide:

- A safe hiding place

- A quiet environment
- Consistent routines

Avoid forcing contact.

Speak gently.

Give your cat time.

Patience now leads to a lifetime of trust and companionship.

Welcome to your new life together.

Chapter 2: Creating a Safe and Comfortable Space

Today' s Key Point

To create a safe place for your cat:

- Understand your cat' s personality
- Provide a quiet and secure environment
- Allow the cat to use the space freely

A comfortable space reduces stress and helps your cat relax.

Why This Matters

If a cat keeps hiding, seems restless, or has accidents, the environment may be the cause.

Cats are territorial animals. Without a safe personal space, they feel anxious and alert.

Common causes of discomfort include:

- Too much noise or activity
- No place to hide
- Dirty or uncomfortable bedding
- Forced confinement in a cage
- Stress from other pets
- Illness or pain

Creating a secure environment helps your cat feel in control.

How to Create the Perfect Space

1. Choose the Right Bed

Cats prefer:

- Soft, warm materials
- Enclosed or semi-covered beds

- Quiet locations
- Elevated areas or sunny spots

Provide multiple sleeping options. Cats like variety.

Keep bedding clean and odor-free.

2. Using a Crate or Cage

A crate should feel like a safe place, not a punishment.

Tips:

- Choose a size large enough to stand and turn around
- Place it in a quiet location
- Add a familiar blanket or toy
- Encourage entry with treats or toys
- Never force the cat inside

Crates are especially useful for emergencies or travel.

3. Provide Hiding Spots

Cats feel secure when they have places to hide.

Good options:

- Cardboard boxes
- Cat trees
- Under furniture
- Covered beds

Place familiar items inside to add comfort.

If your cat is hiding, **do not disturb them.**

Checklist

- Is the bed clean and comfortable?
 - Is the area quiet?
 - Does your cat have multiple hiding options?
 - Does each cat have its own space (for multi-cat homes)?
-

One-Minute Summary

A safe personal space helps your cat relax and feel secure.

Provide comfort, quiet, and freedom.

Let your cat choose where to rest.

Chapter 3:Litter Training and Handling Accidents

Today's Key Point

Successful litter training requires:

- A clean and quiet litter area
- Patience and consistency
- Never scolding your cat

If accidents happen, identify the cause and fix the environment.

Why Accidents Happen

Common reasons include:

Environment

- Dirty litter box
- Too few boxes
- Loud or busy location
- Uncomfortable litter type

Health

- Urinary issues
- Digestive problems
- Pain or arthritis

Stress

- Moving or changes at home
- New people or pets
- Loud noise

Behavior

- Territorial marking
 - Not fully trained (kittens)
-

Training Tips

For kittens

- Place them in the box after meals or naps
- Praise when they use it
- Do not force them

For adult cats

- Place waste smell into the litter box
- Clean accident areas thoroughly

- Avoid leaving scent behind
-

Litter Box Rules

- Number of boxes = cats + 1
 - Scoop daily
 - Keep location consistent
 - Try different litter types if needed
-

What NOT to Do

- Never yell or punish
- Don' t move the box frequently
- Don' t change litter type too often

Punishment increases anxiety and makes the problem worse.

One-Minute Summary

Clean box + quiet location + patience = success.

If accidents continue, consult a veterinarian.

Chapter 4: Choosing the Right Food

Today' s Key Point

Choose food based on:

- Age
- Body condition
- Health status

When in doubt, consult your veterinarian.

Why Food Choice Matters

Nutritional needs change over time.

Kittens

High protein and calories for growth

Adult cats

Balanced nutrition for maintenance

Senior cats

Easy digestion and kidney support

Weight and medical conditions also affect dietary needs.

How to Choose

By Age

- Kitten formula (under 1 year)
- Adult formula (1-7 years)
- Senior formula (7+ years)

By Weight

- Weight control for overweight cats
- High-calorie food for underweight cats

By Health

- Kidney care diets
 - Allergy-friendly formulas
-

Switching Foods

Change gradually over 7-10 days:

Day 1-2: 10% new

Day 3-4: 30% new

Day 5-6: 50% new

Day 7+: fully new

Sudden changes may cause digestive upset.

One-Minute Summary

Right food = right age + right condition.

Check ingredients, monitor weight, and adjust as needed.

Chapter 5:How to Encourage Your Cat to Drink More Water

Today' s Key Point

Many cats don' t drink enough water.

To increase water intake, adjust:

- Location
- Bowl type
- Water freshness
- Feeding method

Good hydration helps prevent kidney disease and urinary problems.

Why Cats Don' t Drink Much

Cats originally evolved in desert environments.

They naturally have a low thirst drive.

Other reasons include:

- Water isn' t fresh
- The bowl feels uncomfortable
- The location feels unsafe
- The environment is too noisy
- Dry food diet provides little moisture

Chronic dehydration can increase the risk of:

- Kidney disease
 - Urinary tract problems
 - Bladder inflammation
-

Practical Tips

1. Improve the Location

Place water in:

- Quiet, low-traffic areas
- Places your cat passes often
- Multiple locations around the home

Avoid placing water near the litter box.

2. Choose the Right Bowl

Cats often prefer:

- Wide, shallow bowls (to avoid whisker contact)
- Ceramic, glass, or stainless steel
- Elevated bowls for senior cats

Some cats prefer **running water**, so a pet fountain may help.

3. Keep Water Fresh

- Change water daily
- Wash the bowl regularly
- Use filtered or boiled-and-cooled water if needed

Some cats are very sensitive to smell and taste.

4. Increase Moisture Through Food

Ways to add hydration:

- Feed wet food
 - Mix water into dry food
 - Offer cat soup or broth (unsalted)
 - Use moisture-rich treats
-

5. Monitor Intake

A general guideline:

About 50 ml per kg of body weight per day

If your cat drinks very little or shows signs of dehydration, consult a veterinarian.

One-Minute Summary

More water = better health.

Provide multiple clean bowls, fresh water, and moisture-rich food.

Small changes can make a big difference.

Part 2: Behavior & Training

Chapter 6: Socialization and Reducing Fear

Today's Key Point

Early socialization helps cats become confident and relaxed.

Expose your cat gradually to:

- People
- Sounds
- New environments

Always move at your cat's pace.

Why Fear Develops

Common causes include:

- Lack of early socialization
- Negative past experiences
- Sudden environmental changes
- Loud noises

- Forced handling

Cats prefer predictable and safe environments.

Unexpected events can create long-term anxiety.

Socialization Tips

1. Early Socialization (3 weeks to 3 months)

During kittenhood:

- Introduce different people gently
- Expose to everyday sounds (vacuum, TV, etc.)
- Use positive experiences (treats, play)
- Introduce other animals carefully

Never force interaction.

2. Socializing Adult Cats

Even adult cats can learn.

- Let new visitors ignore the cat at first
- Allow the cat to approach on its own
- Use treats and toys to create positive associations

If moving to a new home:

- Provide familiar items with your cat's scent
 - Prepare hiding spaces
-

3. Avoid "Scary Experiences"

- No loud shouting
- No forced holding
- No sudden restraint
- Never use physical punishment

Fear damages trust.

4. Create a Safe Environment

Provide:

- Hiding places
- Elevated resting areas
- Clean and quiet spaces
- Consistent daily routines

Predictability reduces anxiety.

One-Minute Summary

Confidence comes from positive experiences.

Go slowly, avoid fear, and let your cat stay in control.

Trust builds over time.

Chapter 7:How to Stop Biting and Nipping

Today' s Key Point

Most biting is not aggression.

It' s usually:

- Play behavior
- Communication
- Hunting instinct

The goal is to redirect the behavior, not punish it.

Why Cats Bite

Common reasons:

Play behavior

Kittens learn biting while playing with siblings.

Attention seeking

Your cat may be asking for food, play, or interaction.

Hunting instinct

Moving hands look like prey.

Stress or overstimulation

Too much petting or noise can trigger biting.

Teething (kittens)

Biting relieves discomfort.

How to Prevent Biting

1. Never Use Your Hands as Toys

Always use:

- Wand toys
- Balls
- Interactive toys

Hands should not be seen as prey.

2. Stop Interaction Immediately

If your cat bites:

- Freeze your hand
- Stop playing
- Look away
- Ignore the cat briefly

This teaches that biting ends the fun.

3. Redirect to Toys

When biting starts:

- Offer a toy instead
- Encourage your cat to bite the toy

Provide chew-safe toys if needed.

4. Provide Enough Playtime

Play daily to release energy.

A tired cat is less likely to bite.

5. Watch for Warning Signs

Stop interaction if you see:

- Tail flicking
- Ears turning back
- Body tension
- Sudden pupil dilation

These signs mean your cat is overstimulated.

What NOT to Do

- Do not hit or yell
- Do not spray water
- Do not pull your hand away suddenly

Punishment increases fear and aggression.

One-Minute Summary

Biting is usually play or communication.

Use toys, stop interaction when needed, and avoid punishment.

Consistency builds better behavior.

Chapter 8: Understanding Meowing and Night Crying

Today's Key Point

Excessive meowing or night crying usually has a reason.

Common causes include:

- Hunger
- Boredom
- Anxiety
- Habit
- Health problems

The solution depends on the cause.

Why Cats Meow at Night

Cats are naturally active at dawn and dusk.

If your cat sleeps all day, they may become active at night.

Other common reasons:

Attention seeking

Your cat has learned that meowing gets a response.

Hunger

Feeding schedules that are too early may lead to nighttime hunger.

Loneliness or anxiety

New environments or changes can increase vocalization.

Health issues

Senior cats may meow due to cognitive decline or pain.

If the behavior starts suddenly, consult a veterinarian.

How to Reduce Night Meowing

1. Increase Daytime Activity

- Schedule play sessions in the evening
- Use interactive toys
- Encourage exercise before bedtime

A tired cat sleeps better.

2. Feed After Evening Play

The ideal routine:

Play → Eat → Sleep

This follows the natural hunting cycle.

3. Don' t Reward Night Meowing

- Do not talk to your cat
- Do not feed them
- Do not turn on lights

Any response reinforces the behavior.

Consistency is important.

4. Provide a Comfortable Sleeping Area

- Quiet location
- Warm bedding
- Safe environment

Some cats sleep better near their owner.

One-Minute Summary

Night crying usually comes from excess energy or learned habits.

Increase evening play, feed afterward, and avoid responding to nighttime meowing.

Consistency brings results.

Chapter 9: Training Your Cat to Stay Home Alone

Today' s Key Point

Cats can stay alone safely if they learn independence gradually.

The goal is to prevent **separation anxiety**.

Why Some Cats Struggle Alone

Common causes:

- Too much constant attention
- Sudden long absences
- Environmental changes
- Lack of stimulation
- Strong dependence on the owner

Signs of separation stress:

- Excessive meowing
 - Destructive behavior
 - Refusing food
 - Overgrooming
-

How to Build Independence

1. Start with Short Absences

- Leave for 10-15 minutes
- Return calmly
- Gradually increase the time

Avoid dramatic greetings or goodbyes.

2. Create an Enriching Environment

Provide:

- Window access
- Cat trees or shelves
- Puzzle feeders
- Safe toys

Mental stimulation reduces stress.

3. Keep a Routine

Feed, play, and interact at consistent times.

Predictable schedules make cats feel secure.

4. Leave Comfort Items

- Bedding with your scent
- Favorite toys
- Familiar blankets

These help reduce anxiety.

Safety Checklist

Before leaving:

- Fresh water available
- Clean litter box
- No dangerous objects accessible
- Windows and doors secured

One-Minute Summary

Start with short absences, provide stimulation, and keep routines consistent.
Gradual training helps your cat feel safe when alone.

Chapter 10: Exercise and Play: How Much Is Enough?

Today's Key Point

Daily play is essential for your cat's:

- Physical health
- Mental stimulation
- Behavior control

Lack of exercise can lead to obesity, stress, and behavior problems.

Why Play Matters

Cats are natural hunters.

Without an outlet for hunting behavior, they may develop:

- Biting or scratching
- Night activity
- Excessive meowing
- Weight gain
- Destructive behavior

Play satisfies natural instincts.

How Much Exercise Does a Cat Need?

General guideline:

2-3 play sessions per day

10-15 minutes each

Adjust based on:

- Age
- Energy level
- Health condition

Kittens and young cats need more activity.

Best Types of Play

Interactive Toys

- Wand toys
- Feather toys
- Laser pointers (finish with a physical toy)

Let your cat:

Stalk → Chase → Catch

This mimics natural hunting.

Environmental Enrichment

- Cat trees
- Wall shelves
- Window perches
- Climbing spaces

Vertical space increases activity.

Rotate Toys

Switch toys regularly to keep them interesting.

Play Routine Tip

The ideal sequence:

Play → Eat → Groom → Sleep

This helps regulate behavior and reduces nighttime activity.

One-Minute Summary

Short daily play sessions keep your cat healthy, calm, and mentally satisfied.

Regular exercise prevents many common behavior problems.

Part 3: Grooming & Health Care

Chapter 11: Brushing and Coat Care

Today's Key Point

Regular brushing helps keep your cat's coat healthy and reduces:

- Shedding
- Hairballs

- Skin problems

It also strengthens your bond.

Why Brushing Matters

Cats groom themselves, but brushing provides extra benefits:

- Removes loose fur
- Prevents mats and tangles
- Reduces hair ingestion (hairballs)
- Stimulates skin and circulation
- Helps you check for fleas, wounds, or lumps

Long-haired cats especially need regular brushing.

How Often to Brush

- **Short-haired cats:** 1-2 times per week
- **Long-haired cats:** Daily or every other day
- **During shedding seasons:** Increase frequency

Regular care is easier than removing severe tangles later.

How to Brush Properly

1. Choose a calm time when your cat is relaxed
2. Start with gentle strokes
3. Focus on areas cats enjoy (back, cheeks, base of tail)
4. Avoid pulling or forcing

If your cat resists, keep sessions short and positive.

Choosing the Right Brush

- Slicker brush for long hair
- Rubber brush for short hair
- Comb for removing small tangles

Introduce new tools slowly.

One-Minute Summary

Gentle, regular brushing keeps your cat comfortable, healthy, and clean.

Keep sessions short and positive to build trust.

Chapter 12:Nail Trimming and Getting Your Cat Used to Paw Handling

Today' s Key Point

Regular nail trimming prevents:

- Overgrown claws
- Scratches
- Damage to furniture
- Painful nail problems

The key is to help your cat feel comfortable with paw handling.

Why Nail Care Is Important

If nails become too long, they may:

- Curl into the paw pad
- Cause pain or infection
- Catch on carpets or fabrics
- Increase scratching damage

Indoor cats especially need regular trimming.

How Often to Trim

Every **2-4 weeks** is a good guideline.

Check nails regularly to avoid overgrowth.

Step 1: Get Your Cat Used to Paw Touching

Before trimming:

- Gently touch the paws during relaxed moments
- Press lightly to extend the claws
- Reward with treats or praise

Practice this daily for a few seconds.

Step 2: How to Trim

1. Use cat nail clippers
2. Trim only the sharp tip
3. Avoid the pink area (the quick)
4. Trim a few nails at a time if needed

If your cat becomes stressed, stop and continue later.

Helpful Tips

- Choose a quiet, calm environment
 - Trim after playtime when your cat is tired
 - Keep sessions short
 - Ask a veterinarian or groomer if unsure
-

One-Minute Summary

Regular nail trimming keeps your cat safe and comfortable.

Start by building tolerance for paw handling, then trim gradually and gently.

Chapter 13: Routine Care for Ears, Eyes, and Teeth

Today's Key Point

Basic hygiene helps prevent infections and long-term health problems.

Regularly check and care for:

- Ears
- Eyes
- Teeth

Small routine checks can prevent serious issues.

Ear Care

Healthy ears should be:

- Clean
- Light pink
- Free of strong odor

Signs of problems:

- Dark discharge
- Frequent scratching
- Head shaking
- Bad smell

If you notice these signs, consult a veterinarian.

To clean:

- Use a veterinarian-approved ear cleaner
 - Apply to a cotton pad (not cotton swabs inside the ear)
 - Gently wipe the outer ear only
-

Eye Care

Healthy eyes should be:

- Clear
- Bright
- Free of excessive discharge

For mild tear buildup:

- Wipe gently with a soft, damp cloth
- Always wipe from the inside corner outward

If you see redness, swelling, or thick discharge, seek veterinary care.

Dental Care

Dental disease is very common in cats.

Signs of dental problems:

- Bad breath
- Drooling
- Difficulty eating
- Red or swollen gums

Prevention tips:

- Brush teeth with cat toothpaste if possible
- Use dental treats or dental diets
- Schedule regular veterinary checkups

Start slowly and make dental care a positive experience.

One-Minute Summary

Check ears, eyes, and teeth regularly.

Early detection and simple care can prevent serious health problems.

Chapter 14:Odor Control: Keeping Your Home Fresh

Today' s Key Point

Most cat odors come from:

- The litter box
- The cat' s coat
- The surrounding environment

Proper cleaning and simple habits can keep your home fresh and comfortable.

Why Odor Problems Happen

Common causes include:

- Dirty litter boxes
- Poor ventilation
- Urine accidents
- Long-haired or poorly groomed cats
- High humidity or enclosed spaces

Cat urine contains strong ammonia compounds, so regular cleaning is essential.

Litter Box Odor Control

- Scoop waste **at least once daily**
- Replace litter regularly
- Wash the box with mild soap every 1-2 weeks
- Use enough litter (about 5-7 cm deep)
- Place the box in a well-ventilated area

Avoid strong artificial fragrances. Many cats dislike them.

Managing Accidents

If your cat urinates outside the box:

- Clean immediately
- Use an **enzyme-based cleaner**
- Avoid ammonia-based products (they smell like urine to cats)

If accidents repeat, check for stress or medical issues.

Keeping Your Cat Fresh

- Brush regularly to remove dirt and loose fur
- Wipe dirty areas with a damp cloth
- Bathe only when necessary (most cats don't need frequent baths)

If your cat develops a strong body odor, consult a veterinarian.

One-Minute Summary

Clean litter daily, improve ventilation, and address accidents quickly.

A clean environment prevents most odor problems.

Chapter 15: Preventing Accidental Ingestion

Today's Key Point

Cats are curious and may chew or swallow dangerous items.

Prevention is the best protection.

Common Household Dangers

- String, ribbon, rubber bands
- Plastic bags
- Small toys or objects
- Hair ties
- Human food
- Cleaning chemicals
- Medications

Even small items can cause serious intestinal blockage.

Dangerous Plants

Some common toxic plants include:

- Lilies
- Pothos
- Philodendron
- Aloe
- Dieffenbachia

If you keep plants, confirm they are cat-safe.

Food to Avoid

Never give:

- Chocolate
- Onions or garlic
- Grapes or raisins
- Alcohol
- Caffeine
- Bones or fatty scraps

Cats should eat only cat-safe food.

Prevention Tips

- Keep small items out of reach
 - Store chemicals and medicine securely
 - Use covered trash bins
 - Check floors regularly
 - Avoid leaving string or thread unattended
-

Warning Signs of Ingestion

Seek veterinary care if you notice:

- Vomiting
- Loss of appetite
- Lethargy
- Drooling
- Abdominal pain
- Difficulty passing stool

Early treatment is critical.

One-Minute Summary

Keep your home cat-safe by removing small objects, toxic foods, and dangerous plants.

Prevention saves lives.

Part 4: Lifestyle Management

Chapter 16: Seasonal Care: Keeping Your Cat Comfortable Year-Round

Today's Key Point

Cats are sensitive to temperature and humidity.

Adjust their environment to stay safe in both hot and cold seasons.

Summer Care

Heat Risks

Cats can suffer from:

- Heat exhaustion
- Dehydration

- Heatstroke

High humidity increases the risk.

Summer Tips

- Provide constant fresh water
- Use fans or air conditioning
- Keep curtains closed during peak sunlight
- Offer cool resting areas (tiles, cooling mats)
- Brush regularly to remove excess fur

Never leave your cat in a parked car.

Signs of Heatstroke

- Panting
- Lethargy
- Drooling
- Vomiting
- Rapid breathing

This is an emergency. Contact a veterinarian immediately.

Winter Care

Cold Risks

Short-haired, senior, and thin cats are especially sensitive to cold.

Winter Tips

- Provide warm bedding
 - Keep sleeping areas away from drafts
 - Maintain indoor temperature
 - Offer heated pads (pet-safe)
 - Increase food slightly if activity decreases
-

Humidity Control

Both seasons require attention to humidity:

- Too dry → skin problems
- Too humid → odor and mold

Use humidifiers or dehumidifiers if needed.

One-Minute Summary

Keep your cat cool in summer and warm in winter.

Stable temperature and comfortable resting areas help maintain health year-round.

Chapter 17: Introducing Guests, Children, and Other Pets

Today's Key Point

Cats adjust best when introductions are:

- Slow
- Calm
- Controlled

Never force interaction.

When Guests Visit

Many cats feel stressed around unfamiliar people.

Tips:

- Allow your cat to hide if they want
- Ask guests to ignore the cat at first
- Avoid loud voices or sudden movements
- Let the cat approach on their own

If your cat stays hidden, that's normal. Do not force contact.

Living with Children

Teach children to:

- Speak softly
- Avoid chasing or grabbing
- Pet gently
- Respect the cat's space

Always supervise interactions, especially with young children.

Cats that feel cornered may scratch or bite out of fear.

Introducing Other Pets

Introduce animals gradually.

Step-by-step approach:

1. Keep them in separate spaces at first
2. Allow scent exchange (blankets, bedding)