

Getting a cat into a carrier



Cats are smart! Many cats don't want to go into a cat carrier because the carrier is associated with going into a loud, moving vehicle and then jabbed and examined at a vet clinic. This is because often the only time many cats go into a cat carrier is for a vet visit. For other cats, they might just be too timid to pick up and place in a carrier.

Place the cat carrier in one of the rooms that the cat can access. The carrier should be in the room permanently, not just a day or week before a vet visit. Depending on progress, a timid cat may only have access to one room which can make it easier to teach the cat about the carrier (see *Fostering a Frightened Cat guide*). Keep the carrier door open all the time.

Spraying a feline pheromone spray (such as Feliway) in the back corner of the carrier or on a corner of the blanket placed in the carrier can also help.

Place bedding/towel/sheet that the cat has previously slept on (without washing it) and place it in the carrier. It's important to do this to associate their familiar smell with the cat carrier to make them more comfortable with the carrier.

Cover all sides of the carrier (except the door opening) with a towel or blanket to make it more enticing to walk into as a 'hiding spot' then follow these steps.

1. 2-3 times a day (initially), place a small amount of a high-value treat (such as cooked chicken, tuna or raw meat for cats from a supermarket) in the back of the carrier. It's important to use a special, high-value treat and not just normal cat food for this.
 - a. If the cat is not fearful of people and likes the treat, he/she should walk inside the carrier and eat the treat almost right away.
 - b. If the cat is fearful of people, he/she may not feel comfortable with eating the treat with you around. If this is the case, put the treat in the back of the carrier and leave the room and then the cat should eat the treat when you are not around. Over time, get closer and closer to the carrier after giving the cat the treat (whilst starting from the other side of the room).
2. When you can stand next to the carrier whilst the cat is eating the treat (which could be immediately, take days or weeks depending on the cat), close the carrier door and keep it closed for a few seconds then open it. Repeat this step and extend the time daily until the cat is in the carrier for a few minutes before it's opened again.
3. After the cat appears fine with steps 1 and 2, when the cat is inside the carrier with the door closed (after step 2), start to pick up the carrier and move it slowly around the room then place it down and let the cat out.
4. Congratulations! You should now be able to easily get the cat into the carrier for vet visits. You should do steps 1-3 once or twice a week to continue the cats main association with the cat carrier being a 'place of yummy treats'.

As you can see, the idea is to make almost every experience with the carrier positive. And only a small amount of the time will it be for a vet visit (an experience which some cats would consider a negative experience).

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When the cat is inside the cat carrier and going to the vet clinic

As the cat will associate their perception of the carrier with their experience whilst being in it, it is important to make the experience as less stressful as possible during the vet visit.

With the towel/blanket that is usually covering all sides except the front of the carrier, cover the front as well (whilst allowing some breathing space). Also, in the car, play soft, classical music for the cat (search 'Cat Music' on Spotify, Apple Music etc). Keep the cat away from other animals as best possible, including loud sounds such as barking dogs.

When the cat has returned home from the vet, you can also offer a high-value treat.