



# Foster Adult Cat Manual



Thank you for your interest in becoming a Foster Parent.

Give a cat a much needed break from the shelter  
and a better chance at adoption!

## Welcome Foster Parents!

With your help, we can save the lives of more animals! We know being a foster parent is a lot of work and we never want you to feel overwhelmed. The JHS behavior team is here to provide education, prompt communication and all necessary supplies to care for your foster animals.

### How Foster Works:

Foster parents are volunteers who take home select animals from the Jacksonville Humane Society.

### Goals:

- Give animals a break from the shelter environment
- Increase the pet's adoptable behaviors
- Find the pet a new home

### How to Become a Foster Parent:

- Sign up as a foster at [jaxhumane.org/foster](http://jaxhumane.org/foster)
  - Contact the behavior department to set up a meet and greet for a foster animal: [behavior@jaxhumane.org](mailto:behavior@jaxhumane.org)



*Believe it or not ... Marbles was actually very happy to find a new family with the help of a foster!*

## Responsibilities of a Cat Foster Parent:

Being a foster parent is more than just providing TLC - you are helping this cat get ready for her new family. We ask that foster homes follow these guidelines:

- Provide a safe and loving home
- Provide training for your animal to improve behavior
- Email JHS updates and pictures for the cat's website profile:  
behavior@jaxhumane.org
- Promote your foster cat for adoption by using social media and sharing the cat with your network
- Respond to all adoption calls and emails; be willing to meet with potential adopters

**There's An App For That!** When you take a pet home for foster care, you will receive an email to use the app from Maddie's Fund. This is a free and easy way to receive behavior tips, training insight and stay in touch. Questions? Email us.



*With your help, our cats will get a shelter break and find a new, loving family!*

## Bringing Home a Foster Cat

*Before you bring your foster cat home*, it is important to prepare yourself, your family, and your home for a new feline companion. Fostering is a family affair, so please make sure that everyone in your household is ready, willing, and able to provide a loving home. Make sure everyone understands their responsibilities, as well as the temporary nature of fostering.

*Planning where you will keep your cat* before you bring her home will make the entire process easier for everyone. When you first bring a foster cat home, you should confine her to a single room, such as a kitchen or family room. This room should not be an isolated room, but a room where you spend a large part of your day or evening.

*It is important to establish a regular routine* quickly so that your foster cat can begin to adjust to your household. During this period, please keep activity to a minimum. We recommend avoiding lots of visitors, your neighbors' animals, or parties during the first few days while the cat is acclimating. Give your foster cat some time to get used to you before you introduce additional new situations and potentially overstimulate the cat.

*Remember that every cat goes through a transition period* when it moves into a new home. Every cat is different. Some may acclimate in a day, while others may take a week or more. Your new foster cat has to learn your routine and your expectations of her. During this transition period, accidents do happen. But with patience, you will find that once your foster starts to become comfortable in your home, she will blossom and you may see a whole new personality emerge. It is incredibly satisfying!

*If you have other animals in your home*, it is important to introduce your new foster cat slowly.

**Do you have other pets or children in the home?  
Keep reading for valuable info!**



## Your Foster and Other Animals (including kids!)

### Cat Introductions:

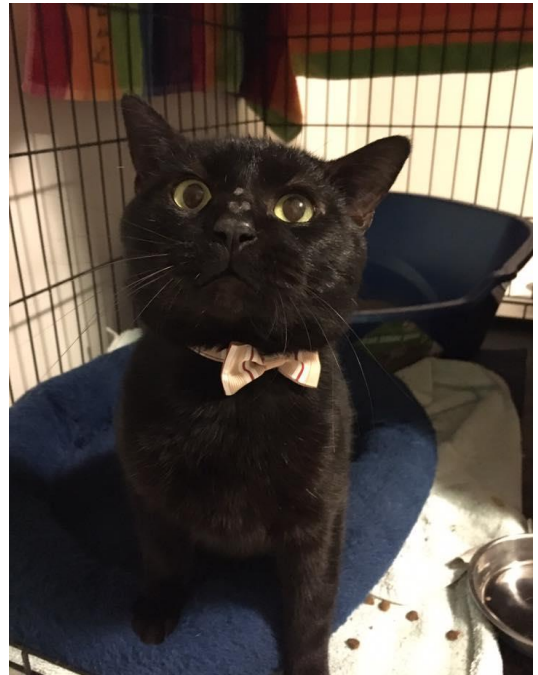
Introducing your foster cat to your current cats should occur slowly. Allow the foster cat to become comfortable in her own room. Once the foster cat is comfortable, let her explore the home for short periods. While this is happening, you can allow your cat to explore the foster's room. This will allow them to pick up each other's scent.

- Cats like to hang out in social groups but often will not interact with each other.
- When you do allow your foster full range of the house, be ready for some communication between your cat and your foster. Hissing, spitting, and growling is all normal cat communication.
- Try to keep the interactions as neutral as possible at first and then slowly try petting the cats at the same time or encouraging them to sit together with you on the couch.

### Dog Introductions:

Cats and dogs also need a slow introduction. Begin by keeping your foster cat and dog in different rooms. After a few days, allow the two to meet but keep the dog on a leash.

- During the first few meetings, the cat and dog will probably not interact face to face – that's okay! Never force interaction.
- The dog's instincts may be to chase the foster cat or bark. Don't allow this.
- Let the dog know this is inappropriate by using a quick, sharp tone saying "uh uh" to get attention and redirect energy.
- Make sure you meet in a place where the foster cat has room to get out of reach from the dog and feel safe – underneath a piece of furniture or on top of a couch, etc.
- Sometimes the cat may give the dog a pop on the nose with a paw or hiss as a warning. This is normal – don't discourage it. These actions will help them set up boundaries and establish a working relationship.
- Continue the intro for about 30 minutes, keeping your dog on leash in case you have to restrain her.
- When complete, return the foster cat back to its safe haven and give your dog lots of praise and a treat and the same for your foster cat.



*When Sarge first arrived at his foster home, he would hiss and swat at the resident dog. But with time and slow intros, they learned to coexist in harmony.*

### After the first successful intro:

Increase the amount of time they are together each session. It is important to be patient and encouraging in their interactions. If you are relaxed, they will be more at ease. Always praise friendly behavior profusely.

Don't rush the introduction or force them to interact more than either is willing. Pressing them to accept each other will only slow down the adjustment process. You should use your best judgment as to when they can interact with the dog off-leash. Observe their interactions carefully.

### Warning Signs:

A dog that is showing overt aggression, such as snarling, growling, or baring teeth, will probably never accept a cat. If there is any aggression, the foster cat is probably not the right fit for your home – please contact the behavior department immediately.

### Child Introductions:

As a general rule, children under 16 year of age should not be left alone and unsupervised with a foster cat. Do not allow children to behave with the foster cat in a manner you would not want the child to behave with a younger sibling. Teach children to pay attention to your foster cat's body language.

Here's a video to help kids understand the correct way to pet a cat:

<https://youtu.be/alu7c0IAak0>

Don't forget to access the JHS Pet Behavior Library for even more tips:

[jaxhumane.org/behavior](http://jaxhumane.org/behavior)



*After many slow introductions, Alfred's foster home discovered that he loved spending time with little children!*

## BASIC FOSTER CAT CARE & TRAINING

The cats at JHS are free feeding. This means they have access to dry food left out at all times. You can choose to continue to do this in the home or feed scheduled meals. We will let you know if your foster cat is on a special diet.

Here's some training ideas to work on with your foster cat:

- Do they like to be pet everywhere? If not, you can help them become more comfortable being touched by touching their sensitive areas and then offering wet food or another great treat!
- What are their favorite toys? Some cats love wand toys, while others prefer balls. What about catnip? Knowing what your foster cat likes is a great conversation starter for adopters!
- Are they comfortable being held or being put into laps? If not, try feeding your foster cat some wet food while you lift them for a short time. You can then work on increasing that time and decreasing the amount of food given.

**Contact the behavior department immediately if you have any concerns about your foster cat's behavior.**



*Bonsai enjoying a break from the shelter in his foster home!*

## The Adoption Process

### Promoting Your Foster Cat:

The goal of the foster program is to get your foster pet adopted. We rely heavily on foster families to help promote their cats. When your foster cat does something extremely cute, send a write-up to the behavior department and we can add it to their online profile!

Other things you can do to promote your cat include using social media and flyers. Do you use Facebook? Post your foster cat's profile for all of your friends to see. One friend may tell another friend and ... voilà, you've found a home! Also, feel free to post flyers at your workplace, your child's school, the local coffee shop, or wherever might be appropriate.

Don't forget about other social networks – Instagram, Next Door, Imgur, Twitter, etc.

Why not send all your co-workers an email? Don't be afraid of Craigslist – it is a place that many families turn to when looking for pets.

Maddie's Fund has a GREAT resource for fosters in our program. Download the information by using this link: <https://bit.ly/2vNPpit>



August 12 at 10:38 AM

You may know Charlie from the shelter, a long-time resident there. Well he may be the easiest foster ever and would be a great addition to any family. I picked him up Thursday 8/8. He instantly was friendly with both of our dogs and now sleeps next to them on the couch frequently. My cat is adjusting to him and he has been nice to her. He's just relaxed and gives her space. As a result, my cat Leila is already pretty relaxed around him too. He's friendly, affectionate and likes to take long naps near you. He needs special food due to a problem with his digestive system, but is perfection other than that. He's 10 but has a lot of love still to give. And may be the easiest cat you'd ever have!!! Please help spread the word about Charlie.



*A great sample post for a cat in foster.*

These local Facebook groups will help with promoting:

Jacksonville FL Pets Needing Homes

Jacksonville Foster Pet Showcase

JHS Fosters

### Taking Photos and Making Posts about your Foster Pet

Here are some great tips to take the best photos to get your foster pet adopted!

- Try to use natural light
- Turn off the flash
- Try to catch them in a candid moment – doing something funny or cute!

When you are posting on social media you want to keep it funny, positive, and light!

- Talk about why your foster is special
- Don't focus on your foster's past – focus on their new future
- Have a funny story about your foster? Share it!



- Ask people to email [behavior@jaxhumane.org](mailto:behavior@jaxhumane.org) for adoption info.

[HeartsSpeak.org/edu](https://HeartsSpeak.org/edu) has an excellent tool kit for helping to write biographies!

#### When You Find a Family:

1. When someone is interested in meeting your foster, they will email the JHS Behavior Team. The staff will review the information to approve it.
2. Upon approval, the JHS staff will forward the email to you. Please reply within 24 hours – JHS provides excellent customer service and as our team member, we know we can trust you to do the same.
3. Schedule a meet and greet at your convenience. You may choose to meet the adopter in your home, their home, at a neutral location or you can meet at JHS.
4. After the meet and greet, reach out to us to finalize the adoption or discuss further.
5. JHS will send you a digital copy of the adoption agreement. Please have the new adopter sign it and collect any fees. Then return the paperwork and fees to JHS.
6. Celebrate and then get a new foster!

We will check in with the new family after we receive their adoption agreement.



#### Contact:

Please contact our behavior department if you need assistance at any time during your foster journey: [behavior@jaxhumane.org](mailto:behavior@jaxhumane.org) or 904.493.4586.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q1: How long are cats in foster homes?

A1: Each foster cat is different. The more you promote your cat and work with her to resolve any issues she might have, the quicker she will be adopted!

Q2: Can I adopt my foster cat?

A2: Yes! Some foster families are looking for a foster-to-adopt arrangement, where their ultimate goal is to adopt, but they want to “try out” the cat first by fostering. Often foster families fall in love with their foster cat and decide they want to keep her.

Q3: What if I need to go out of town?

A3: If you are planning a trip, please first post in our Facebook group – JHS Fosters – and see if anyone can help. If not we can take them back at JHS. Please inform us at least two weeks in advance; the more notice you are able to give us the better!

Q4: If I have my own animals, can I foster cats?

A4: Yes! However, keep in mind that it is important to introduce your animals to your foster cat slowly and appropriately. Please see the specific sections above for more information on introducing your foster to your own cats and dogs.

Q5: What supplies do I need to foster?

A5: JHS can provide any supplies that you need, including cat beds, food and water bowls, toys, etc. You need to provide space, basic training, exercise, and love!

Q6: Do I need to have prior medical knowledge or cat experience to foster a cat?

A6: No. Of course any previous experience will be of help, but it isn't required. If your foster cat is receiving medical treatment, you may be asked to dispense medicine to your foster cat so you will have to be comfortable following a veterinarian's instructions.

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