

Getting Your Reluctant Cat in a Carrier

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Let's face it, there's no tougher ten pounds than a cat being forced to do something it doesn't want to do. Getting into a carrier falls into that category. Being probably the smartest animal on earth doesn't help either. They figure out what that carrier means early on. However, it is very important to transport and keep your cat in a carrier for a number of reasons. If it's a quick trip to the vet, moving your cat to a new home or coming to the shelter, it's all about safety. For you and your cat.

In the car a cat climbing and jumping around or getting under the pedals is a distraction at best and a disaster at worst. As well, many cats get car sick and may vomit or eliminate in the car. This is miserable for the cat and a mess to clean up. Motion sickness is aggravated when freedom in the car allows the cat to watch the things going by. Confinement in the carrier minimizes their ability to see the passing movement. It also confines any accidents.

Escape from the car should be a major concern when transporting your cat for any reason. Stopping for gas, rolling down the window, or an unfortunate accident that breaks a window or throws the cat from the car all could result in a lost cat, severe injury or even death.

Taking the cat into and out of the car and building can also result in a startled cat fleeing into traffic or running off and getting lost. The flight or fight reaction is never more evident than in a frightened cat.

Once at your final location, the carrier becomes a familiar safe haven for your cat. For example, if you've ever been to the veterinarian with your cat in a carrier, you too were probably amazed at how fast your cat ran back into the carrier to go home. This is because it actually does associate the carrier with you, home, and safety.

All cats being in carriers also helps minimize transfer of communicable diseases and maintains the cleanliness of the area you are visiting.

Even though you may think your cat hates the carrier, this is another time when you must use better judgment as a parent and do everything to keep your cat safe.

Cat Carrier Tips

- Carriers now come in many shapes, sizes, and materials: top open, front open, tents, soft carriers, plastic and wire, with snap off tops and very large zipper openings. Find the one that is easiest for you and your cat.
- Make sure your carrier grows with the cat: small for kittens, new and larger for adults. The carrier should be large enough for your cat to lie out on its side comfortably or sit away from any soiling.
- To handle a cat that is reluctant to even approach the carrier, place a large folded bath towel over your entire cat and scoop it up like a swaddled baby. This keeps you secure from teeth and claws and prevents your cat from seeing and resisting the carrier.
- If need be, turn the carrier upright and lower your cat in back feet first, while holding with a towel.
- Do not put food, water litterbox or other objects in the carrier, Even for long trips. More often than not, they make more of a mess than they do any good.
- Always line the bottom of the carrier with absorbent material. A couple layers of newspaper and then a towel or small blanket. This is comfortable and absorbs any eliminations or soiling that may occur. If not, your poor cat's fur become the mop.
- When traveling, do not take the cat out of the carrier for any reason until you have arrived at a secure destination and are inside the building with the door locked behind you.
- Medication is available for traveling and motion sickness. Motion sickness is much worse with the stopping and starting of city driving. Often once on open highway and secure in a carrier your cat may relax and do well without medication. Talk to your veterinarian about medicating your cat for travel.

*****Never handle any cat that you are not comfortable with, or that is showing signs of extreme stress including, but not limited to, panting, drooling, growling, hissing and swatting*****