

# How to Get Your Cat Into a Carrier and Live to Talk About It

If you've ever tried to put your cat into a carrier, you know the tooth-and-nail fight that can ensue. The good news is — there is a way to overcome crate hate. Get prepared for your next vet trip with this 8-step advance survival plan.

Reviewed by Dr. Becker

## STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- One of the biggest challenges of getting your cat from point A (your home) to point B (more often than not, your veterinarian's office) is convincing kitty to get into her carrier
- The reason so many cats display hate for their crate is because they only see the thing when they're about to be taken on a scary car ride, only to arrive at an even scarier destination — a veterinary clinic
- The solution to cat vs. crate is to spend the time and energy necessary to acclimate your kitty to his carrier long before you need to transport him in it
- Put a few of your kitty's favorite toys and treats into the carrier at random times. The idea is to associate only pleasant, fun, yummy things with the carrier each time your cat investigates it
- Ideally, your cat will come to view his carrier as a comfy, safe space

***Editor's Note: This article is a reprint. It was originally published February 2, 2015.***

One of the reasons many cat guardians are so reluctant to take their pet to the vet, or anywhere, is because most kitties fight tooth-and-nail to avoid being placed in a carrier. The reason for crate hate is usually because the cat only sees the evil device once or twice a year, and it represents confinement, a scary ride in a car, and a visit to a place (the veterinary clinic) that feels very threatening.

All the angst associated with vet visits and other kitty outings can be minimized by helping your cat get accustomed to her carrier at home, on her own timetable, and in an entirely non-threatening manner.

## Conquering the Cat Carrier in 8 Steps

1. Purchase the carrier well in advance of your kitty's next scheduled outing. Bring it home and set it up in a location she spends time in. Place some comfy bedding in there, and prop or tie the door open so that it can't accidentally close. Your cat may get curious enough to begin going in and out on her own. (There's a very slim chance she'll go in on her own and actually bed down for a snooze. If she does, you're way ahead of the game!)
2. The next step is to entice kitty with food, so place her food bowl close to the carrier. If she's still so wary of the thing that she won't come to her bowl, move it just far enough away so that she'll eat. Add a small amount of a special treat she loves on top of her meal to further tempt her. Once kitty is eating from the bowl without hesitation, start moving it closer each meal until she's eating comfortably very close to the carrier.

3. Next, place the food bowl inside the carrier, right at the entrance, so your cat can reach bites of food without having to actually step inside.
4. Now it's time for further enticements. Put a few of your kitty's favorite toys and treats into the carrier at random times. The idea is to associate only pleasant, fun, yummy things with the carrier each time your cat investigates it. Consider placing some organic catnip in there. Spraying a feline facial pheromone like Feliway in the carrier several times a week can also be very beneficial, or using stress reducing flower essences for anxiety or fear.
5. After several days of eating out of his food bowl placed just inside the carrier entrance, it's time to move Mr. Kitty's dish further in. Move it a few inches toward the back of the carrier each day until he's standing completely inside as he eats.
6. Once you and your feline companion have successfully achieved all the above steps, it's time for patience ... patience ... and more patience. What you're now waiting patiently for is the sight of your cat hanging out in his carrier, and hopefully napping there. This could take several weeks — or even several months — which is why you need to be patient while continuing to put meals, treats, toys, catnip, and other fun stuff in the carrier.
7. Once your cat is feeling at home in his carrier, try closing the door for a very short time with him inside, making sure to let him out before he becomes anxious or panics. Slowly extend the time in the crate by 30 seconds to a minute during each practice session. When you can close the door for significant periods of time without upsetting your cat, you can start bringing him along on short car rides to get him accustomed to being in his carrier in a moving car that doesn't stop at the veterinary clinic.
8. When you reach the point where your kitty is spending time on his own resting, playing, and eating in his carrier, when the time comes to take him somewhere, it shouldn't be traumatic for either of you. If you have an appointment with the vet at, say, 10:00 a.m., and your cat goes into his carrier at 9:00 a.m. to nap, just close the door until you're ready to leave the house.

Each time you return home with your cat, go right back to providing meals, toys and treats in the crate so he continues to associate his carrier with goodness. Ideally, your cat will come to view his carrier as a comfy, safe space.

## Sources and References

dvm360 April 30, 2014

---