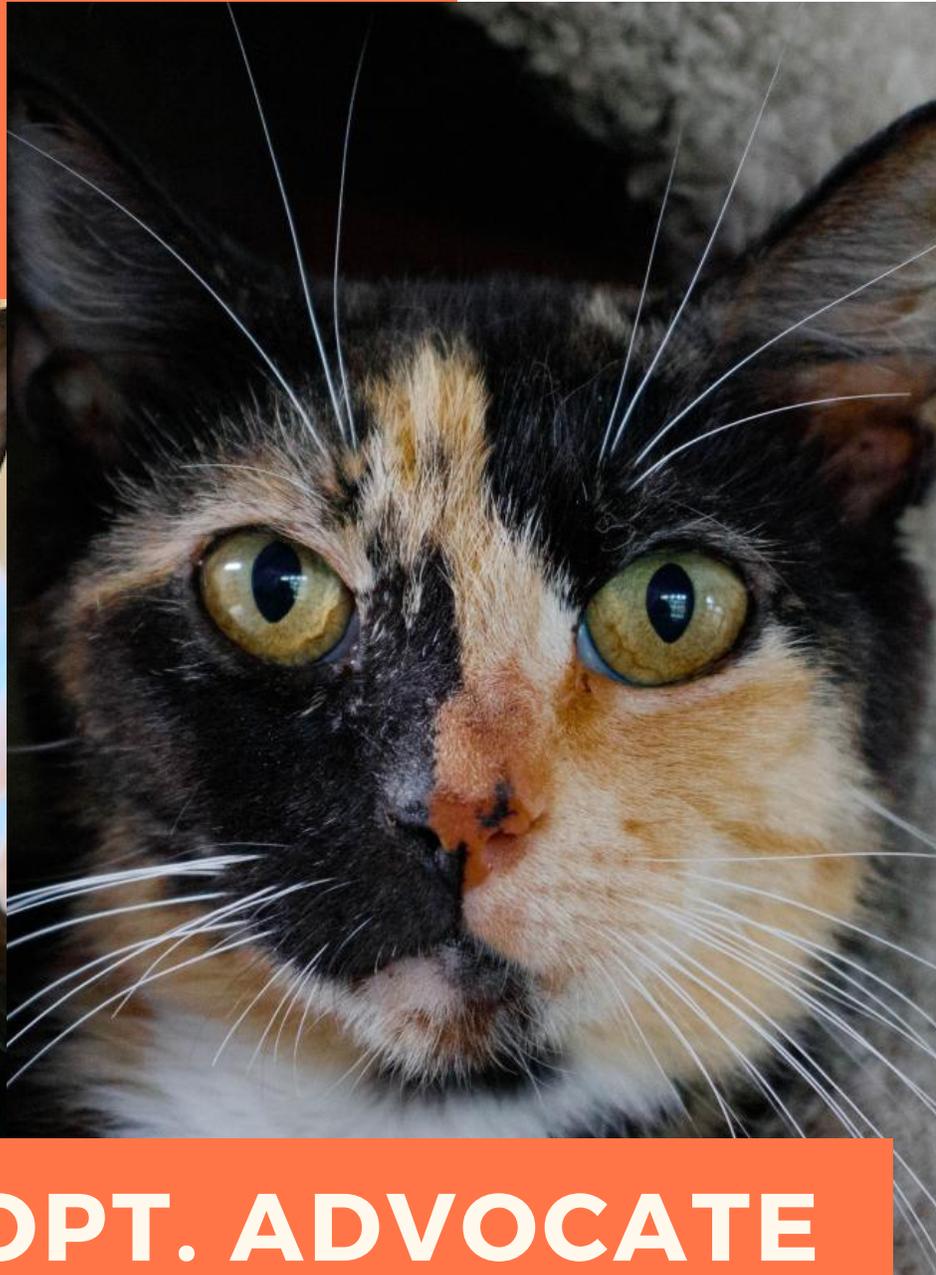




**PENSACOLA  
HUMANE SOCIETY™**

**CAT  
FOSTER  
HERO  
GUIDE**



**LOVE. ADOPT. ADVOCATE**



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# FOSTER HERO RESOURCES

## FIRST AND FOREMOST, THANK YOU!

You're about to provide a more stable and less stressful situation to cats waiting for adoption. Foster homes are crucial in our mission to save the lives of as many cats as we can. Without you we are extremely limited in the number of cats that we can take in each year. You're also helping ease the transition from adoptable to adopted and making sure that more and more cats are successful after adoption!

## YOUR FOSTER TEAM

Aly Martinez 850-270-3136  
foster@pensacolahumane.org

## FOSTER RESOURCE PAGE

Be sure to log onto our Foster Resource Page and take a moment to look through all of the resources provided there. You'll also be able to find contact information for the apps we use, our Foster Coordinator and our Superheroes:  
[www.pensacolahumane.org/fosterresources](http://www.pensacolahumane.org/fosterresources)  
login: foster  
password: fosterhero

## APPOINTMENTS

Acuity is our scheduling app where we direct fosters to make all wellness, medical, drop off and pick up appointments.  
<https://pensacolahumanesociety.as.me/>



## TRELLO

Trello is our web-based board where we post all of our animals in need of foster with all of the information that we have on each of them, as well as showing the ones who have already been placed.



## FACEBOOK

If you are on Facebook, be sure to join our private foster group, Pensacola Humane Society Foster Heroes!  
[www.facebook.com/groups/fosterhero](http://www.facebook.com/groups/fosterhero)



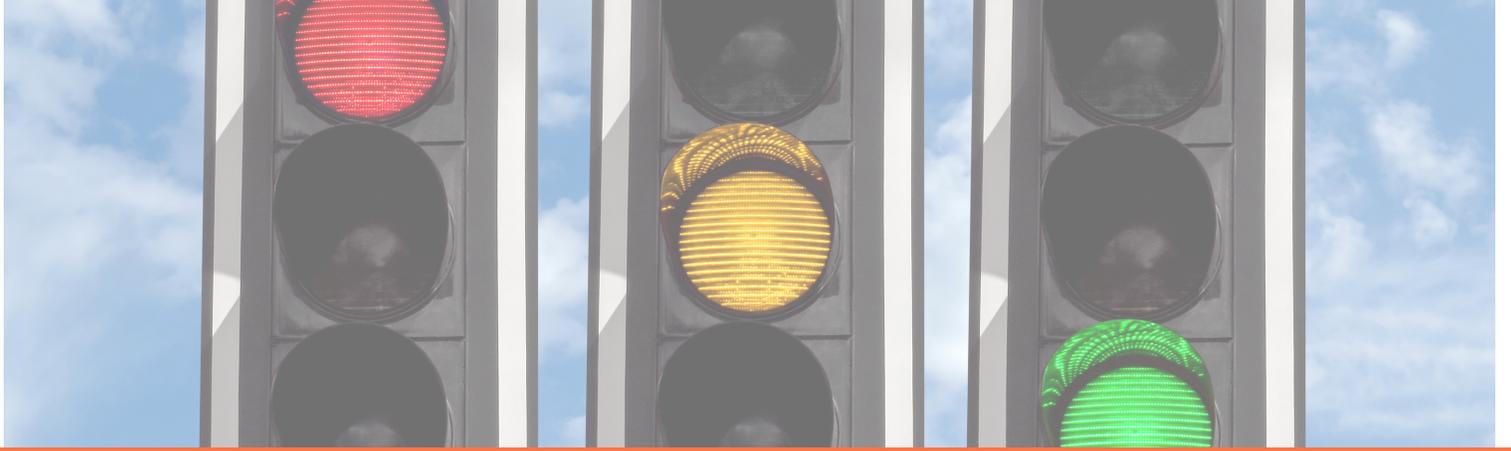
## VOLUNTEER HOURS

The Pensacola Humane Society awards 12 volunteer hours per day during your active foster/volunteer period. If you need a letter acknowledging these hours please email the foster team at [foster@pensacolahumane.org](mailto:foster@pensacolahumane.org).

## OTHER OPPORTUNITIES

The foster team also has several volunteer positions that always need filling, from photography and marketing to admin assistant. Email the foster team for more information! [foster@pensacolahumane.org](mailto:foster@pensacolahumane.org)  
Want to volunteer at the shelter itself? - Apply here:  
[www.pensacolahumane.org/volunteer](http://www.pensacolahumane.org/volunteer)





## EMERGENCIES HAPPEN, NOW WHAT?

### **GREEN LIGHT EMERGENCIES: TEXT FOSTER SUPERHERO OR SEND AN EMAIL TO THE FOSTER ADMIN: FOSTER@PENSACOLAHUMANE.ORG**

- Hot Spot/Rash
- Light coughing/sneezing
- Single episode of vomiting/diarrhea
- Dirty ears
- Fleas
- Visible worms in stool
- Trouble urinating
- Watery eyes

### **YELLOW LIGHT EMERGENCIES: SEND TEXT TO YOUR SUPERHERO OR FOSTER ADMIN**

- Multiple diarrhea/vomiting episodes
- Chewed or removed sutures
- Lethargy
- Lack of appetite
- Limping
- Cut or puncture
- Any act of aggression
- Light blood in stool
- Colored/thick discharge from nose or eyes
- Dark colored urine

### **RED LIGHT EMERGENCIES: IMMEDIATE PHONE CALL TO ALY MARTINEZ 850.270.3136 OR MELISSA GARRETT 850.206.9175**

- Severe trauma
- LOST foster animal
- Ingestion of toxic plants/chemicals/medications
- Cat bite on humans or animals
- Unresponsive
- Difficulty breathing
- Seizure/Disorientation
- Distended abdomen
- Profusely bleeding from any orifice

### **DEATH OF A FOSTER**

If a foster passes away while in your care immediately call Aly. She will instruct you on the next steps.

MOST MEDICAL NEEDS WILL BE HANDLED BY OUR MEDICAL STAFF AT OUR ADOPTION CENTER OR OUR CLINIC. IF WE CANNOT HANDLE IT IN HOUSE WE WILL DIRECT YOU TO THE APPROPRIATE VETERINARIAN AND FOLLOWING STEPS. DO NOT TAKE YOUR FOSTER TO AN OUTSIDE VETERINARIAN AND DO NOT TAKE A FOSTER TO ANY CLINIC WITHOUT AUTHORIZATION.

# Key Rules and Responsibilities

## When Fostering Adult Cats



### Your Responsibility

Remember that your foster cat's wellbeing is in your hands when you take them home. It's your responsibility to keep them safe and to inform the foster team of any medical or behavioral concerns so that they can be addressed quickly, accurately and safely. Below are some guidelines and rules that will help you uphold your responsibility to these cats and the Pensacola Humane Society Team.

### Marketing

Updated pictures and videos should be sent to the foster team via text, email, or the facebook group weekly. This is crucial in keeping the public updated on our available animals and getting them adopted!

### Rules and Guidelines

- Foster cats should not be allowed outside if not in a carrier.
- Do not travel out of the area with your foster cat unless approved by the Pensacola Humane Society Foster Team first.
- Do not use boarding facilities, daycares, groomers or any other third-party care providers for your foster cat without permission from the Pensacola Humane Society Foster Team. If you are in need of any of these services let the foster team know so that we can assist you.
- Return any supplies borrowed at the end of each foster period so that they can be given to the next foster family.
- Immediately notify the foster team if your foster cat is lost/stolen or if your foster cat bites a person or another animal.

# Getting Started

## Before bringing your foster cat home

Preparing in advance will help make your foster cats transition from shelter, or previous home, to your home as successful as possible. While the Pensacola Humane Society will provide as many of the supplies you'll need as we can you may find it beneficial to have supplies on hand as you foster more and more cats.

### Setting Up Your Space

The first few days in a new space can be stressful for your cat. We recommend confining them to a single room as they acclimate to keep their stress levels low. Some cats may ask to be let out sooner than others - that's okay! But be sure to watch for signs of being overwhelmed or stressed out.

Make sure that your space is free of hazards. Pick up all odds and ends, safely stow away cords, and remove cleaning supplies from the area. If there is anything in the area that you cherish or do not want potentially ruined, we recommend removing that as well. See below for a list of common plants that are toxic to cats.



### Recommended Supplies

- Non porous food and water bowls
- A hard sided cat carrier. PHS will always have a carrier to provide but if you choose to use your own, ensure that it is well labeled.
- Food and treats. We will always give you some food to start so that you can safely transition to a new food of your choosing. We will also provide any kind of special diet if needed.
- Scratchers - these can be the cardboard kind or the more permanent scratchers. Remember to sanitize the permanent scratchers between visitors!
- Extra blankets. Cats love soft places to lay and having small blankets to fold and place around the room are a washable alternative to cat beds.
- Litterboxes and litter - we use pine pellets at the adoption center but you're welcome to use whatever litter you're comfortable with.
- Stain and odor remove - for those inevitable accidents.
- Toys, having a variety is often appreciated by the cats.

# Getting Started

## Bringing Your New Foster Cat Home

Transitions can be difficult for all involved -- you, your family, your pets, and most of all, for the new cat you are bringing home. Shelters are stressful, overstimulating environments that can cause cats to act out in ways they might not normally act. Even if they are coming from another foster home, it's important to keep in mind that your new pet needs time to adjust to living in *your* home.

### Common Behaviors During Transitions:

**Fear and Irritability:** Cats are sensitive creatures and it is common for them to be overwhelmed in new situations. To help your foster cat adjust to it's new space we encourage you to keep them confined to one room for the first 3-7 days, shyer cats may need a longer adjustment period. By restricting the amount of "new" your cat will settle in faster and have an easier time with the transition. Take your cats cue - if they're ready to come out sooner they will let you know. Having them in one spot for the first few days will also allow you to be more aware of any health concerns that arise in those initial days.

Your new cat may also spend the first few days hiding, especially if they are already prone to shyness. Providing a space with appropriate hiding places will help ease kitty into comfort and confidence. Appropriate hiding spaces can be covered cat beds, cat towers, and cardboard boxes. Making sure that these spaces are available also prevents kitty from finding inappropriate spaces to hide in - like inside furniture, under the bed, or finding their way into other unsafe places.

**Upper Respiratory Infections:** Another reason we recommend giving cats a few days to settle in in a quiet place is that a stressed out cat can make themselves sick. Symptoms of an upper respiratory infection can be discharge from the eyes and/or nose and sneezing. If you notice these please alert the foster team according to the emergency protocol.

**Not Eating:** It's not uncommon for a cat in a new space to not eat for a day or two - so long as they continue to drink and use the litter box as normal this isn't a huge concern. If this behavior lasts more than a few days please alert the foster team.

**Litterbox Issues:** Another common behavior for new kitties is pottying outside of their litterbox. Make sure that they know where their litterbox is and it is near where they are hanging out for those first few days. If they have to pass by an established pets regular spot they may be too nervous to make it to the box and find somewhere else to eliminate.



*If you are concerned about any behaviors please contact your foster mentor or the foster team for more help.*

# Getting Started

## Bringing Your New Foster Home Continued...

*Here are some Do's and Don't's for their first few weeks in your home. These will help ensure a smooth transition and a happy, healthy pet!*



Do create a quiet, cozy and safe place for your cat to decompress where they can have access to their open crate at all times away from other animals.

Do sit with your cat and let them, on their own accord, sniff you and your home.

Do give your shy or nervous cat at least 1 week before introducing him/her to new people (anyone who doesn't live with you).

Do provide your foster with fun enrichment, mind stimulating games/puzzles/treats. (ask us for suggestions if you need! We LOVE enrichment)

Do remember that your new cat has been through some history that we might not understand and needs time and your patience so that they can be the best cat they can be.

Do play with your foster. This may allow them to release some nervous energy.

Don't leave your new foster alone with children unsupervised.

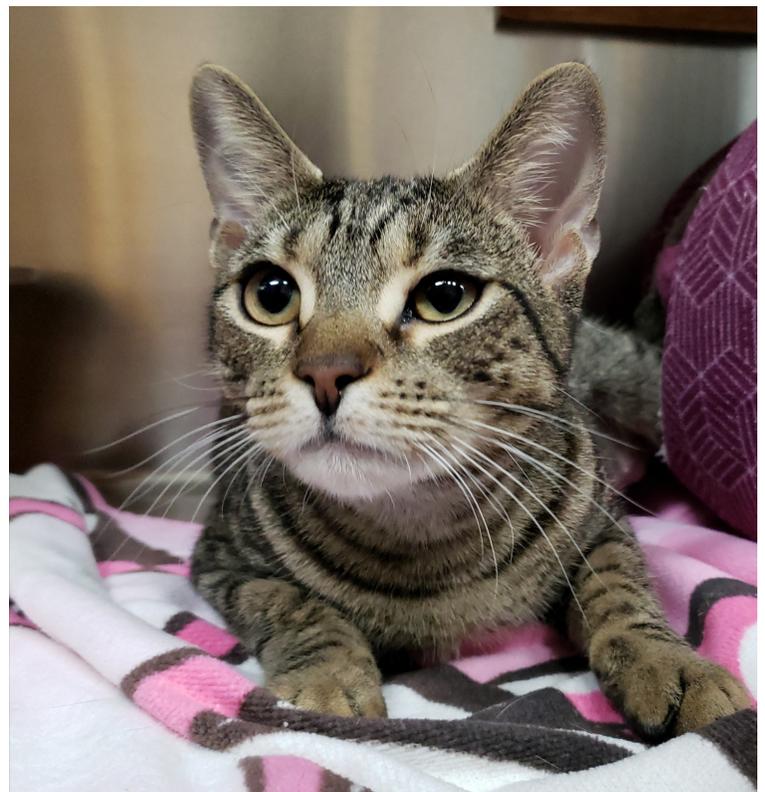
Don't leave your new cat and other pets together unattended. Separate when you are not home or able to supervise their interactions.

Don't try, or allow anyone else, to hug, pick up, or force petting on your new cat.

Don't expect your cat to be social right away, even with you.

Don't feed your foster any people food or table scraps.

Don't allow your foster cat outside for any amount of time. Screened in porches are fine but kitty must be accompanied by you at all times.



# Behavior

## Common Issues and Solutions

If there are any seriously concerning behaviors or skin is ever broken, the Foster Team needs to be notified right away. Refer to your Emergency Protocol on Page 3.

PHS cannot guarantee the temperament or behavior of any foster cat. PHS relies on their fosters to learn more about their cats and in-home habits. Environment and time can impact temperament and behaviors

The Foster Team does promise to work with each and every case to the best of their abilities in order to have a successful outcome and foster experience. Guidance, consultations and assessments will be provided.



### Common Issues and Resources

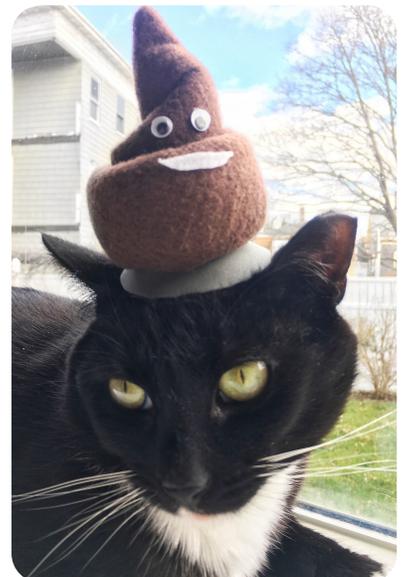
Over the next few pages you'll find some solutions to behavioral issues that we commonly see in shelter cats. Not every solution is one size fits all and we encourage you to research and share other techniques and tips that you find that work for you and your foster cats. We also have many more resources, trainings, and hand outs on our foster resource page! You can see that by going to [www.pensacolahumane.org/fosterresources](http://www.pensacolahumane.org/fosterresources). The login can be found in the Foster Hero Resources listed on page 2 of this guide.

### Litter Box Issues

There are multiple reasons why a cat may defecate or urinate outside of the litterbox.

- If your foster is freeroaming a large home, be sure there are multiple boxes throughout the house, or keep your foster in their own room with their box during their foster stay.
- If the box is a covered type, try leaving it uncovered.
- Be sure your foster cat has his/her own designated box if you have other cats in the home.
- Make sure the size of the box is compatible to the size of the cat.
- You may try switching cat litter. Some cats are finicky when it comes to the type of litter used.

If your foster has diarrhea, blood in their stool, worms or dark, potent urine, there may be a medical reason as to why they are not properly using their box. Let the foster team know right away.



# Behavior

## Common Issues and Solutions Continued...

### Scratching Furniture

Chances are your foster cat is not declawed and PHS strongly urges people to research this topic, as we do not condone it nor do we adopt to anyone who wants to declaw our cats. Cats have a natural instinct to scratch. They do it to express emotions such as excitement, stress or to mark their territory - cats have scent glands in their paws. They will also do it to shed old parts of their nails. Sometimes they will just do it to get a really good stretch in!

- **Trimming:** Keeping your foster cats nails trimmed is not only a great part of their basic healthcare and hygiene, but it helps them become used to their feet being handled. Cats have dewclaws that they cannot manually file down on their own by scratching. These claws can and will curl under and grow into the cats paw pad, causing very painful inflammation and injury. It's important to regularly check these to be sure this isn't happening. If you cannot cut your foster cat's nails on your own, make an appointment with the Foster Team to have them trim your kitties claws.
- **Scratch Posts:** There are many types of scratching devices out there for cats to use in order to release the natural urge to scratch. There are small cardboard scratchers, tall standing wooden or cardboard, rope wrapped ones, and even the elaborate cat trees with multiple areas for scratching. The foster team can normally provide something for you if you need, but if you will regularly continue to foster cats, it would be a great investment to have a sturdy, larger post/tree for your guests.
- **Soft Paws:** These soft, non-toxic caps are superglued over the cats natural nail to keep them from scratching unwanted surfaces. PHS prefers these to be a last resort, as they do not allow normal instinctive behaviors, but can help if necessary. Please allow the Foster Team to assist with applying if you are not able to do it yourself.



**Prevention & Redirection:** Your foster cat may still need some assistance with learning what is okay to scratch on and what is not. Redirection is always key. If you have a post, be sure the cat knows that it is there for scratching. You may put their paws on the post and show them. You can apply catnip to the items they need to be drawn to. Placing some double sided tape along the areas of the furniture that they are scratching can help deter them as well as wall corner guards, should be start scratching drywall. As a last resort, you may keep a spray bottle of water around to lightly spritz if the cat begins using furniture, but please do not abuse this and create hostility or fear

# Behavior

## Common Issues and Solutions Continued...

### Jumping on countertops

While it may not seem like a big deal to some cat lovers, others do not want cats jumping up on areas. It's best to try and keep your foster from getting into those habits. Things like this are some of the many reasons cats are surrendered to shelters or rehomed. So, to prevent that, we want to curb things such as this before they may even start!

Why is it a good idea to keep cats off the counters?

- Keeps them away from where food is being eaten and prepared: Not only does this keep potential litter toes away from your meals, this is a safety measure to ensure your cat does not get into anything toxic.
- Nobody wants their precious keepsakes broken or knocked over.
- Should they break something made of glass, they risk getting hurt.
- Cats don't know what a hot stove is and the way to find out ends up with severe injury.

It's in a cat's nature to climb and jump. This is also a way for them to get away from other animals or humans, should they need their space or for safety reasons. Here are some things to keep in the home that are good for cats to escape to:

- Cat perch, tree or condo
- Window cling shelf
- Cat climbing wall frames or shelf

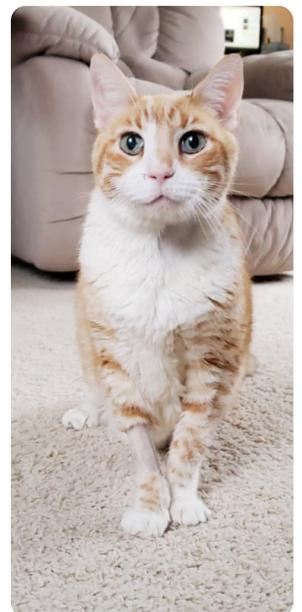
How do I deter my foster cat from jumping where they do not belong?

- Provide one of the above options for them to safely use.
- Sprinkle cat nip on and keep their food/toys near their cat approved climbing units.
- Make your countertops less inviting. DO NOT leave food out unattended.
- If your cat comes around at dinner cooking time, consider making that their meal or treat time as well in their designated area and away from the areas you do not want them on.
- Cats dislike citrus scents. Try cleaning the surfaces with a natural or homemade citrus cleaner.
- You can place aluminum foil on the areas you wish to keep them from. When they try to jump on it and touch the foil, they will immediately jump down.
- NEVER push or shoo them from a high area. You risk scaring them and they could fall or hurt themselves.

### Aggression towards other animals

Adjusting your new foster cat to established cats can take time, even months for everyone to get along. Cats do not adapt to change as quickly as dogs normally do and can be irritable or fearful when you first get them home, as stated on Pg.6. Be sure you give your foster cat their own room to have their own space where they can get used to the new smells and sounds of your home. Established pets can sniff through the door for a week or so before meeting. You may then switch to using a babygate after some time to keep the barrier, but less of one, for pets to now smell and see each other. If there is no intense growling or hissing, remove the gate and let them interact.

Grumbling and hissing is normal, but if there is physical contact fighting, separate the foster and try again in a few days to a week later.



# ADOPTABLE CATS

## When is My Foster Available for Adoption?

	Younger than 4 months	Older than 4 months
Microchip	X	
FIV/FelV Test		X
FVRCP	X	
FelV		X
Rabies	X	
Catego	X	
Ponazuril (3-5 days)	X	
Panacur (3-5 days)	X	
Spay/Neuter	X	

- To be considered available for adoption through PHS all cats must have each of the vaccinations, treatments, and procedures listed as appropriate according to their age.
- If your foster cat doesn't have a history of vaccinations prior to coming to the shelter, they will receive a FVRCP booster two weeks after their initial dose, and an FeLV booster 1 month after the initial one.
- Cats do not have to have the booster in order to be available for adoption, that may be up to the adopter to finish with their vet.
- If your foster cat comes in unaltered we will schedule their spay or neuter as soon as possible.

## When is My Foster Cat Unavailable for Adoption?

Our goal is to make animals available for adoption as soon as we safely can and to minimize the amount of time spent in the shelter. Here are times that your foster may be made unavailable:

- Severe behavioral issues that would make your foster cat unsafe to place
- Medical issues that need to be managed such as injury, upper respiratory infections, or medical issues that have not been diagnosed or controlled.
- Your foster cat does not have the treatments, procedures, and vaccinations listed in the chart above.

*Available animals that are temporarily brought back to the shelter or are with a babysitter foster are not made unavailable. They will have the same adoptable status that they had with their full time foster.*



## What if My Foster Cat Has FIV or FeLV?

Cats with FIV can live a full and happy life cohabitating with other cats. Their new owner will be made aware of the FIV status and encouraged to have yearly exams with their vet to ensure their cat is thriving and healthy.

While Feline Leukemia suppresses the immune system, predisposing cats to deadly infections, they can still live a happy and long life. We encourage applicants/fosters with other cats to have them vaccinated before taking in an FeLV+ cat or to have their new FeLV+ cat be the only feline in the home.

# Adoption Procedure for Animals Adopted From Foster

*This is the protocol for all available animals without any age/health restrictions*

1. Adopter puts in adoption application through the website.
2. Foster team looks over the application for any discrepancies in their application as well as for anything in their application that we know wouldn't work for the animal. -needs to be an only pet, not child or cat friendly, etc.
3. The foster team will then send the applicant an email going over the animals medical history, answer any further questions and let the applicant know their place in line for that specific animal.
4. The foster team then sends a copy of the application to the foster.
5. Foster(you) reaches out to the applicant within 24 hours of receiving their information to set up a meeting. **NOTIFY ALY WITH YOUR MEETING DATE/TIME.** This is for everyone's safety and to make sure that a PHS staff member is available to process the adoption.
  - \*Cat meetings **MUST** be done at your or the applicants home\*
  - a. Keep in mind that these applicants haven't always made that emotional connection yet so reaching out ASAP is imperative so we don't lose their interest.
  - b. Meetings can be set for any day.
  - c. Nothing is set in stone at this point, take a minute to talk to the adopter about their lifestyle, what are they looking for in a pet, do they have unrealistic expectations for the animal they are interested in adopting? Talk to them about the behaviors you've seen in your foster and what their normal day looks like. You know your foster better than we or anyone at the shelter do at this point and you're as much an advocate for them as we are.
6. If the adopter wants to proceed with the adoption, please notify Aly. Adoptions are done over the phone and you do not have to come into the shelter to finish up this process.
  - a. Aly will then send a link to their phone to sign our adoption contract and pay the adoption fee.
    - i. Unless otherwise stated: Cats are \$10 and anything 8+ years of age is waived.
    - ii. If the adopter does not have a smartphone we can send the link to your phone instead to finalize, or they will have to do this in person at the shelter Tues-Sat 11-3pm.
7. Once they have completed the contract and paid, the foster team will let you know that the adopter is all set and they can take their new pet home.
  - a. Adopters are instructed to bring their own materials to take their new pet home. I.e. a carrier or collar and leash. If they don't we still want everyone to be safe and they can take them on the leash and collar or in the carrier provided, we just ask them to return it within 7 days to the shelter.
  - b. The foster team will email the adopter copies of the animal's medical records. They will also receive info about registering their microchip and what to do if things aren't working out with their new pet.
  - c. Any future medical needs will need to be handled by their own veterinarian now.
  - d. You as a foster will need to return any supplies you borrowed to the shelter within 7 days unless you plan to continue fostering. Please discuss with Aly.
8. Feel free to exchange contact information with the adopter and reach out over the next few days and check in with them, you're welcome to counsel them through any non medical issues or just check in and see how everyone is settling in together.

**\*What if I really feel like this isn't a good fit or the applicant gives me a bad feeling?**

At the end of your meeting, let the applicant know that the foster coordinator will be in touch with them about the adoption and then send the foster team a detailed description about why you think this would be an unsuccessful adoption. Your input matters!

# Adoption Procedure for Animals in Foster-To-Adopt Program

*This is the protocol for all animals required to go through our foster to adopt program because they are underage or other needs.*

1. Adopter puts in adoption application through the website, applications can be found in each animal's listing.
2. The foster coordinator looks over the application for any discrepancies as well as anything we know would not work for the animal they are applying for -needs to be an only pet, not good with children, etc.
3. The foster coordinator will then send the applicant an email asking if they have further questions, discussing the animal's medical needs and the applicant's place in line.
4. The foster coordinator will then send a copy of the application to the foster.
5. Foster(you) reaches out to the adopter within 24 hours of receiving their information to set up a meeting. **NOTIFY APLY WITH YOUR MEET UP DATE/TIME.** This is for everyone's safety and to make sure that a staff member is available to process the adoption.  
\*Cat meetings **MUST** be done at your or the applicants home\*
6. Keep in mind that these applicants haven't always made that emotional connection yet and the sooner you reach out to them the better so we don't lose their interest.
7. Nothing is set in stone at this point, take a minute to talk to the adopter about their lifestyle, what are they looking for in a pet, do they have unrealistic expectations for the animal they are interested in adopting? You know your foster better than we or anyone at the shelter do at this point and you're as much an advocate for them as we are.
8. If the adopter wants to proceed, call Aly and she will go over all final steps with you and the applicant. Applicant **MUST** sign the foster contract before taking their new pet home.
9. Feel free to exchange contact information with the adopter and reach out over the next few days and check in with them, you're welcome to counsel them through any non medical issues or just check in and see how everyone is settling in together.



**What if I really feel like this is not a good fit or the adopter gives me a bad feeling?**

Let the adopter know that the foster team will be in touch with them about the adoption and then send the foster team a detailed text about why you think this would be an unsuccessful adoption.

# Meeting Adopters and Counseling

*As your foster cat's adoption ambassador, we rely on you to do the majority of the adoption counseling with potential adopters. Below is a list of topics to use as starting places for conversations with adopters. We're not trying to use these questions to deny people but rather to figure out if this cat would be a good fit and matches what the adopter is looking for. Please peruse our foster resource page and our public resource page to familiarize yourself with common behavioral solutions, should those arise. We want to set everyone up for success!*

## COUNSELING TOPICS FOR CATS

- What are you looking for in an animal?
  - For example; Are you wanting companionship, cuddling, mouser, outdoor animal, etc.
  - These questions will help us better match animals to homes. We don't want someone with an active and loud household to adopt a timid cat without going over that with them.
- Do you plan on moving/deploying any time soon?
  - This question is to help provide moving or deployment resources – like dogs on deployment, pet resumes for apartments, etc. and to help counsel them through moving with pets and the commitment they will have.
- Do you have a current veterinarian?
  - Let them know that there is a list of veterinarians on our website. You're welcome to recommend your personal vet to them as well.
- Is there anything you wouldn't be willing to deal with in this animal?
  - Ex: Destructive behavior, health concerns, litterbox training issues, energy level, escaping, etc. This is to get a jump start on counseling them through common issues so that they feel more prepared to handle anything that may come their way.
- What do you expect children to be able to do with this animal? (skip this question if they don't have children)
  - This question is two fold, we can talk to them about animal-child safety, and if we have an animal we know doesn't like loud noises or sudden movements, we can help suggest another and better fit. We also try to educate on any rough housing or invading space when it comes to children and ANY animal. We also do not want adopters to expect their children to solely care for the animals. These cats will be family pets and not used as a learning or growing lessons.
- Have you worked with any of the following problems before (list the ones that we know this animal has, if any): such as rough play, excessive meowing, animal aggression, timidity, door darting, furniture scratching, thunder or separation anxiety, resource guarding.
  - This is to begin counseling through problem areas before they get home so that they and be more prepared after adoption and fewer dogs and cats are returned
- Do you need information on introducing your new cat to other dogs or cats?
- What do you know think about declawing?
  - PHS strongly advises against this and will deny an applicant for wanting to declaw. We will always educate and inform unknowing peoples on this topic. Some people do not honestly know what declawing really entails, so we do believe in having a conversation on it and if the topic becomes eye opening for applicants and they agree to not declaw, we may approve. There are safer and healthier alternative measures to take if someone is dealing with a cat scratching things they shouldn't be. Declawing cats removes actual bone and will cause long-term arthritis, pain and inflammation in the paws, causing even more problems, such as litter box issues.

## CAT MEET AND GREETINGS

If an applicant wants a cat to meet their animal in order to determine adoption, we discuss the reasons why this is not the best idea. The rule of 3 applies here. For the first 3 days, you should provide space and boundaries. It will then take around 3 weeks for kitty to feel comfortable and settled. 3 months in to the adoption will be where you then finally see their full personality and gain their trust. Having a cat suddenly change their routine upon meeting the family, and throwing a new animal into their face will not give a true reaction to how they will acclimate in the home down the road. We suggest slow introductions for cats.

# MARKETING GUIDE

## WHY SHOULD I MARKET MY FOSTER CAT?

Our goal as Pensacola Humane Society staff and fosters is to get animals into new homes as quickly and safely as possible. Without marketing, your foster cat will continue to stay in foster homes simply because the community of adopters doesn't know how wonderful your foster cat is or that they even exist. The following section will help prepare you to market your foster animal and outline your responsibilities in this area.

## PICTURES AND VIDEOS

- Pictures can be sent via text, email, posted on the Trello or to the Facebook group.
- Your first set of pictures should be sent within the first week of having taken your foster home.
- Please send videos via email as the quality is ruined when sent to the coordinators work phones.
- Pictures should be shared with the foster team frequently. Using the same pictures to market them will cause even more adopters to lose interest. We need new, fresh, exciting photos and videos often.

## LIFESAVING MARKETING

Our approach to marketing is known as "lifesaving marketing." Compared to traditional marketing, lifesaving marketing is more inclusive, more dynamic and easier on shelter staff! Take a look at some of the differences between the two styles:

### Traditional Marketing

- Following the "rules"
- Pet marketing via biography
- Stop signs in text
  - "NO DOGS"
  - "Must be the only cat"
  - "Needs a home with no children under 12"
- General animal care social media posts, funny pet videos, foods to avoid at Thanksgiving, etc., with no specific tie-in to the organization's mission of adoption.
- All social media and other communications created by shelter staff

### Lifesaving Marketing

- Thoughtful rule-breaking
- Highlighting a specific pet's adorable quirk, or a story about an interaction with other cats or people
- Biographies are also used, but not exclusively
- Leaves the adoption counseling to the pet's foster and adoption counselors
- Community-creating language: *you, us, we*
- Use only messages that are fun and engaging and at the same time relevant to your mission
- Volunteer-and foster- driven messaging for innovative content

## OUR GOALS

With any adoptable pet marketing, your most basic goal is to create an emotional connection between your supporters and the featured pet. Emotional connections are what drive us to act (sharing a post, advocating for a pet, adopting, etc.). Obviously we want to find an adopter for your foster dog and the way we will do that is by marketing them to create an emotional connection between the dog and our community.

# 4 MARKETING GUIDELINES

## #1 - DON'T USE "STOP LANGUAGE"

"Stop Language" is essentially a disclaimer about the negatives of your foster cat (e.g, "not litterbox trained", "claws furniture", etc.). This type of information is for the counseling section of adoption and not the marketing section. Even - and especially! - if your foster has behavioral challenges, you'll need to cast the widest net possible then whittle away at inquiries until you find the right match! Full disclosure will always happen during the counseling process. By disclosing this during counseling you can answer questions and educate rather than providing one little statement that will run adopters off when they read about your foster cat.

## #2 - BE ACCESSIBLE

Have you ever reached out to someone to purchase something and they didn't respond for days? By that point you've already moved on to another product or purchased it from another person or store. The same thing happens with adopters. They came across your foster's profile or post and was star struck - now we need to keep their attention! The more accessible you are, the more likely a potential adopter is to remained engaged and proceed through the process. As a general rule, the faster you plop a foster down in front of a potential adopter, the better. People are often not willing to work much for an animal they haven't met, so it may fall to you to bridge the gap when you a get a lead. Once a potential adopter meets your foster in person, an emotional connection is usually made, enabling the relationship to grow on its own.

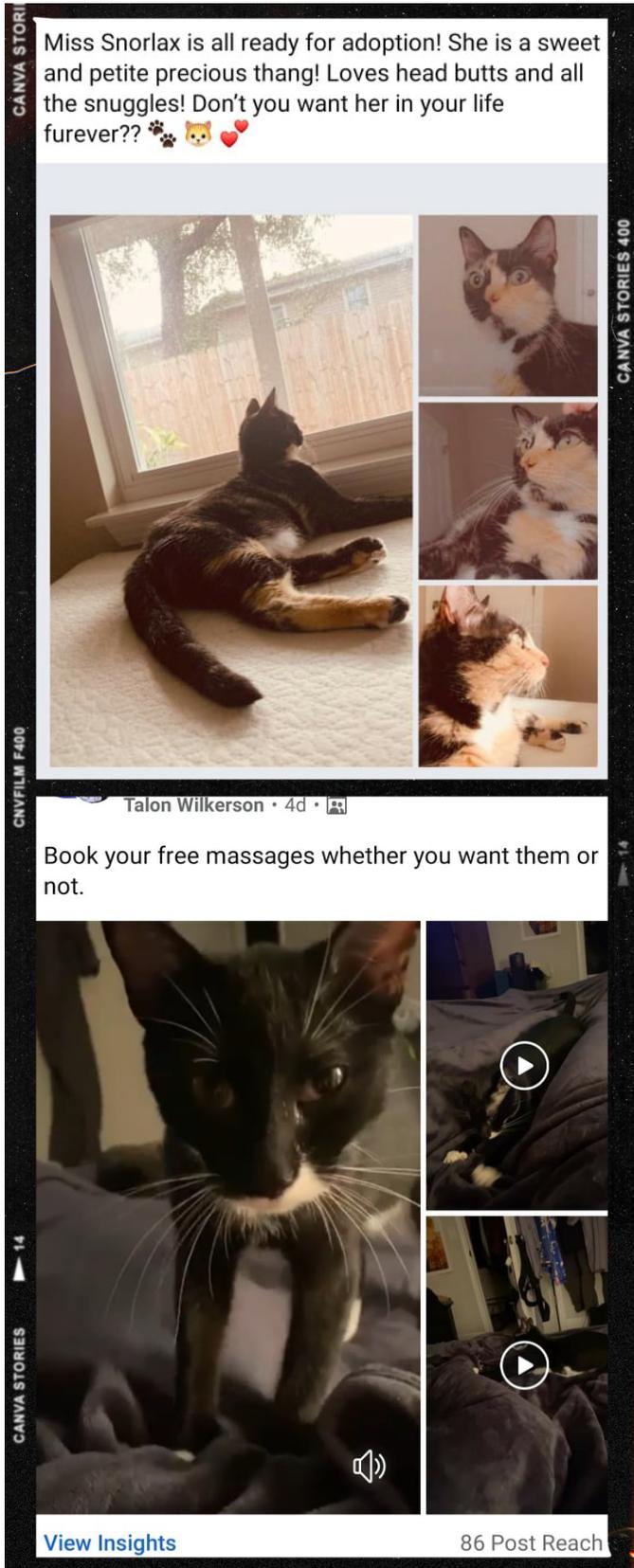
## #3 - BE CREATIVE!

Don't be afraid to try new things! The community is more likely to share your foster cat's story if it makes them feel something. You may strike gold! Email a rescue cat's story to your local news station, radio station, make a TikTok featuring them, or you can make them a profile on popular dating apps! Get creative!

## #4 - BE EVERYWHERE

Post every place that will let you. The more sites, digital and physical, that display your foster's face, the closer you are to the right match. The content does need to be engaging, but the phrase "out of sight, out of mind" applies here.

*Always tag The Pensacola Humane Society on any post you share and make sure that these posts are set to public view!*



## THE BUILDING BLOCKS

There are an infinite number of ways to market your foster pet. Biographies are important, but think outside the box when you create your other marketing tools. Other things you might consider featuring are the cute quirks the pet has, stories about things they did, the pet's behavior in the home or skills they have learned. Think about ways your foster pet reveals who they really are. And those things they do that you find absolutely adorable? Chances are potential adopters will, too!

IN THIS SECTION WE'LL EXPLAIN HOW YOU CAN CREATE THE MANY THINGS THAT GO INTO MARKETING A SHELTER OR FOSTER CAT.

## CONTACTING ADOPTERS

If you're uncomfortable with adopters having your personal number and/or email address you can create new ones for free specifically for handling adoption inquiries. GMAIL is a free email service and instead of using your first and last name when you are setting it up you could do "FIRSTNAME FOSTER" instead. Google voice provides a phone number with texting and calling capabilities for free. This way you can put contact information on flyers and whatnot without worrying about your personal information being out there.

## A GRIPPING FIRST SENTENCE

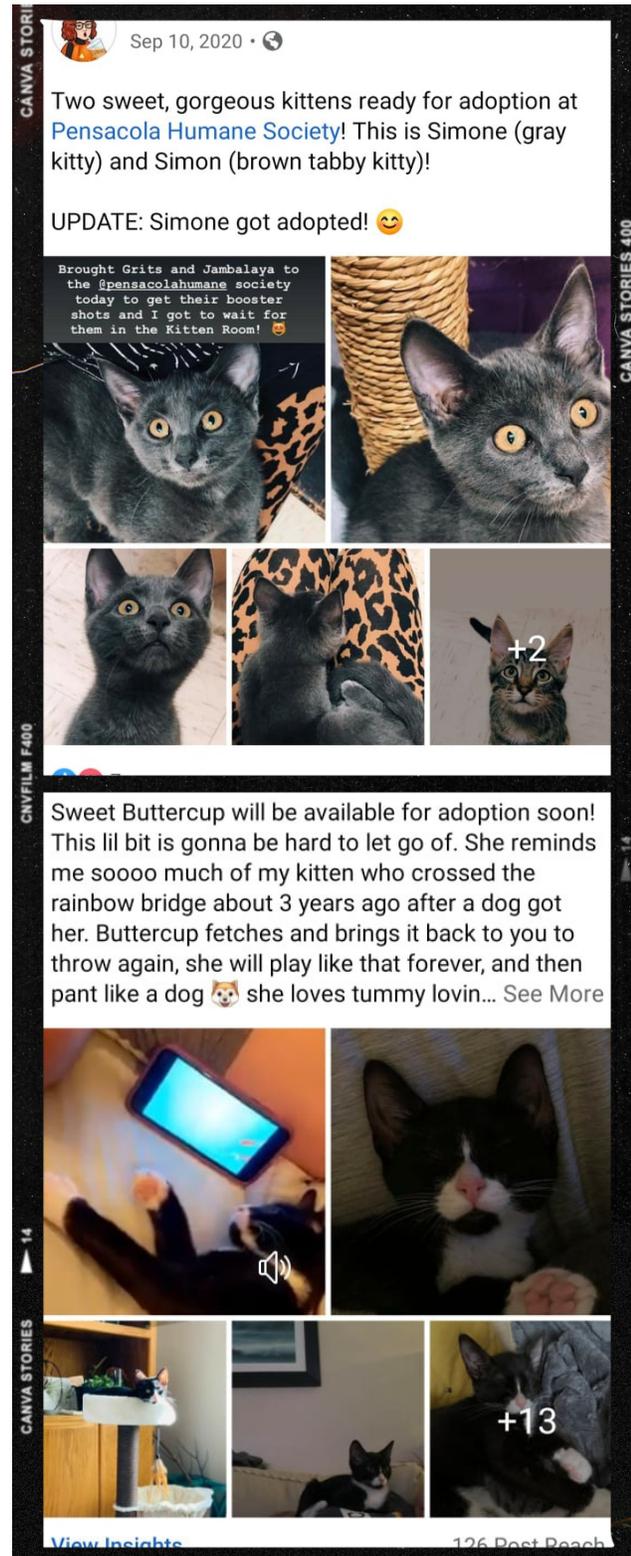
Similar to a title, the first sentence of your text is crucial. This is what the reader will use to determine whether to keep reading. What you're looking for is text that will make an emotional connection with the supporters and make them want to find out more about your foster pet.

### DON'T

- Meet Midnight!
- My name is Kitty!
- Bella is our Pet of the Day
- We don't know why Coco hasn't been adopted yet!
- Hi! My name is Binx..

### DO

- Who's the squishiest, cutest kitty on the block? Alfredo is!
- Balloon-bouncing, mouse-catching, life loving Cricket is our longest-term kitty resident
- In a foster home full of brothers, what's a girl to do? Take the lead, of course..!



## A GREAT TITLE

Posts on certain sites (Craigslist, Imgur, etc.) may necessitate a title. A title is exciting and different will set your post apart and increase your chances of further investigation by potential adopters.

**DO** - Use a title as an opportunity to snapshot your foster's personality or dabble in the dramatic:

- Couch Purrito Seeking Netflix Buddy
- Meet Sir Harley the Gentleman
- Save Raven, the Forgotten Senior Cat

**DON'T** - Go the generic route. Most titles will look like this and most will get passed by:

- My Foster Needs A Home
- Adopt Genie
- Available for Adoption Cat

## A GOOD BIOGRAPHY

Most shelters list their adoptable pets online, and for this every pet needs a biography (bio). As the foster, you are the person who most likely knows the pet the best, and are uniquely suited to writing or updating their biography. Be sure to send your biography via email to the foster team or put it in your foster's personality survey.

Write a short and sweet summary that includes some information on your foster pet's behavior, likes and dislikes, and the best things about them - kind of like an author's biography at the end of a book. Leave out negative details (Stop Signs) such as "no other pets," "needs training," etc., as these can deter even the perfect potential adopters and are best discussed one-one-one during adoption counseling. As in all adoption marketing, our most basic aim is to create a positive emotional connection with the reader.

There are several different ways bios can be written. The traditional method is to paint a picture of your foster pet that gives potential adopters a rounded view. Another method is to tell a story about them in order for potential adopters to get deep insight into one aspect of their personality. In general, try to stay positive in your writing, but the gut-puncher may be a method to try in certain cases such as your longest-term resident or hardest-to-adopt pet.



Pensacola Humane Society

October 12 at 10:30 AM · 🌐

Oh Esme, what beautiful colors you have!  
All the better to mesmerize you with, my dear.  
Oh Esme, what big green eyes you have!  
All the better to track that laser beam with, my dear.  
Oh Esme, what a sassy personality you have!  
All the better to summon my new family with, my dear!  
Esmerelda has been told a time or two that she's a Chatty Cathy with a typical Calico cattitude and we wouldn't have her any other way! This adorable pastel loaf is in a foster home soaking up the cuddles and head boops she can get until her forever family finds her. Could that be you?

Apply today to meet her!

<https://pensacolahumane.org/pet/?pet=42331899>

#esmerelda #meetme #adoptme #greeneyes #catsass #prettykitty #shopourfosters #fosteringsaveslives #shophtheshelter #catsofpensacola #loveadoptadvocate #78yearsofsavinglives

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# PHOTOGRAPHS

Photographs can be the key to your foster's adoption. Getting photos that are well-lit, in focus and that give the viewer a window into a pet's personality can be tricky, but we have some ideas that can make this much easier for you.

## Always have your camera ready

Without a camera handy, you may not be able to capture those intimate moments that will help your pet make an emotional connection, like when your foster cat is finally comfortable enough to rest their head in your lap.

## Taking Multiple Photos

One foster explains, "I am an awful photographer. This is easily combated by taking one million rapid fire photos at once. Odds are you'll snap something to work with." Whether you're an ace photographer or not, taking multiple photos increases the chances of coming up with something good.

## Take Photos with Animals and/or People

Photographs taken with people and/or other animals are great because they not only feature the pet, they give information as well. A photo of two cats together looking happy tell potential adopters, "This cat is good with (at least some) other cats." A photo of a cat and a small child implies that the cat is safe with children. Keep this in mind when creating marketing material for your foster pet.

## Take Photos of Cats "Living"

studies have shown that photographs of cats taken around the home can help them get adopted more quickly. Hanging out in the bathroom sink, lounging in a window, or cuddled with your kiddo helps people to actually picture that cat in their home doing the same things.

## Make Sure That Your Pet is Looking at the Camera

The eyes are the window to the soul, so it follows that eye contact is helpful in establishing an emotion connection, even if it's just from a photograph

## Use Photos to Showcase Personality

We want potential adopters to get a feel for our foster pets' personalities, so use photos in a way that does just that. Take photos that capture an aspect of a pet's personality. When viewed together, one gets a more accurate picture of who they are.



# VIDEOS AND MORE

## VIDEOS

Great videos can give the best picture of who your foster is. They can offer legitimate proof that you have a very good kitty on your hands and cast a spell on potential adopters. Videos have the power to clinch the connection before an official meet-and-greet happens. The following are a few tips for making great videos.

- **Hold the camera horizontally (unless doing a Facebook live)**
  - Holding the camera vertically can create wide black lines on either side of the video and make it harder to see the subject, your foster pet!
- **Make your video 60 seconds or less**
  - Attention spans are short, so make sure your video is fast-paced and succinct.

## CREATE A FLYER

You can use Canva, or any program you'd like, to create the flyer. The design does not need to be intricate - simply is often best. Use on or two awesome photos, plus your short and sweet bio or story. Include contact information. These flyers can be hung at your office, your school, the local coffee shop or anywhere that will let you hang a flyer! Print it yourself, or try making it into a poster at your local Staples or Office Depot.

## STEPS TO MARKET YOUR FOSTER DOG

### #1 - GATHER YOUR TEAM

You can surely do this alone, but why not tap some of your friends and acquaintances to market with you? Recruit help from the Pensacola Humane Society Foster Heroes page or your own friends and family!

### #2 - MARKET! MARKET! MARKET!

In order to create content that connects your foster with potential adopters, you need to make marketing material (a photo, video, story, etc.) a minimum of every 7-10 days. Make sure your camera is always on hand for those great photo-op moments. When your foster does something memorable or touching, write it down so you can craft a post.

### #3 - DIVERSIFY YOUR PLATFORMS

The shelter's social pages may be where you get the biggest return on investment for your marketing material, but don't stop there. Market to potential adopters using different avenues, such as your own personal social media pages or ones you and others create specifically for the purpose of marketing pets, as well. Post on Craigslist. Post on Instagram. Ask the guy who runs that page that markets local shelter pets, too - or create one yourself!

Social Media Sites to Try: Craigslist.com, Instagram, Twitter, Nextdoor.com, Imgur, Reddit, Rescueme.org, The Shelter Pet Project

### #4 - CONNECT WITH THE COMMUNITY

Introduce your foster to friends and family. Take photos with little "adopt me" signs or scarves. Make some flyers about your foster and how to adopt them. Ask those you meet to help advocate for your foster cat by posting on their own social media pages. Find people to help spread the word!

### #5 - TRY ALL THE THINGS!

There are infinite ways to market your foster pet; more great ways are being discovered each day. So long as your ideas are safe for you and your foster, TRY IT!