

# Feline: Teach your cat to love their carrier in 8 simple steps

Teaching a cat to voluntarily enter a carrier can make future transport much easier and significantly reduce stress during these events. Before commencing step 1, it is important that an appropriate carrier is obtained. If the cat has previously had a negative experience in their existing carrier, it is recommended that a new one is purchased. Carriers that can be taken apart by removing the top half are generally considered the best choice. Refer to Figure 1 for more information. You can complete this training with alternative carriers, but some modifications to this guide may need to be made.

## Step 1:

Take the carrier apart so that only the base of it is placed within the cat's environment. A piece of bedding that is familiar to the cat should be placed within the base and remain there throughout the process (unless necessary to change). Leave this in their environment 24/7 and allow them to investigate it in their own time.

## Step 2:

Once the cat has been observed either showing no response to the base of the carrier or resting calmly in it, you can start to leave a small amount of high-value treats scattered in it multiple times a day. Do not lure the cat in; simply toss the food and leave.

## Step 3:

Place the top part of the carrier on, with the door off. Repeat step 2.

## Step 4:

Prepare a small number of high-value treats. Toss one treat inside the carrier; when the cat enters, remain still and wait for them to finish eating, then toss another treat outside the carrier to 'reset'. Repeat multiple times throughout each session.

### Checkpoint



- ↳ When you reach steps 5-8, start each session at step 4 and work up.

## Step 5:

The door can be placed on for this step. Repeat step 4, but when the cat enters the carrier, gently close the door; they should eventually turn around and look at you; when they do, provide another treat through the door, then open the door and toss a treat away from the carrier to 'reset'. Repeat multiple times.

### Tip



- It's best to keep sessions frequent but short in duration (several minutes at most) and always try to end each session positively.
- If at any point the cat doesn't want to enter the carrier or appears distressed (pawing to get out of it, vocalising), leave a 'jackpot' of treats and try again another day.

## Step 6:

Same as the previous step, but add in placing a towel partially over the sides of the carrier after the door is closed.

## Step 7:

Same as the previous step, but gently lift the carrier briefly off the ground after the towel is placed over it.

## Step 8:

Same as the previous step, but gently lift the carrier off the ground and walk a short distance before placing it back on the ground. Provide a 'jackpot' of treats!



**Figure 1** Icatcare (accessed 2023) Cat friendly resources to support TRAVEL poster.

Available at: <https://icatcare.org/veterinary/resources/>