

Introducing Your New Cat to Your Resident Cat



When you introduce a new cat into your household there are some steps you should keep in mind. Some cats are naturally more social than other cats, for example a kitten who had littermates might want a dog or cat companion where as a older cat that hasn't had much socialization may not share territory very willingly. Cats are naturally territorial and the introduction of new cat to resident cat needs to be a slow process. You don't want the interaction to create hostility between your pets. Also remember that all animals communicate with different body language. One pet may be sending "play" signals but the other pet may misinterpret the behavior as something else. Be the mediator so that every interaction between your pets ends on a positive note.

Introduction Set-up

- **Confinement:** Create a sanctuary room for the new cat with a litter box, food and water. Also make sure to provide scratching posts, vertical space and hideaways for the new cat. Don't forget to put toys in the room even if he does not seem interested yet. Bring your new kitty directly to this room and close the door. Spend some time with your new cat if he comes out of the carrier right away, but give him time if he's nervous.
- **Equal Attention:** Make sure to go into sanctuary room to visit with your new cat daily so they can have interaction with you but don't forget your resident animal! You should wash your hands before you interact with your resident animal as to not overwhelm her with the new cat's smell. Don't make a big fuss of the new situation. Act normal and give your resident pet the same amount of attention you would on any other day.

Cat to Cat Introduction

- **Swap Scents:** Start by taking two different rags or hand towels and rubbing it on the face (scent glands) of each cat. Then swap the towels and let the opposite cat smell them. This will start to get them used to each other's scent in a non-confrontational way. Next you can switch an item that they sleep on or a piece of soiled litter to continue to acclimate them to each other's scent.
- **Switch Living Areas:** Once your cats are ok with smelling the scent of the other, then you can start getting them use to sharing the common area. First you will put your resident cat in another room and let your new cat out. Your new cat will smell all the areas in the house that your resident cat has marked with his scent glands without having to be frightened by him. Let your new cat mark some areas (rub his face on them) and if he doesn't do it himself you can help him by using the towel. Once he has been out for a short period put him away and let your resident cat out to smell the new cat's scent in the house without the stress of a face-to-face meeting.

- **Feeding Time:** Now you are ready to feed your cats on the opposite sides of the door to the sanctuary room. If they aren't interested in their food you can feed them treats or play with them on either side of the door. This will help them associate the other cat with something enjoyable! Make sure not to put the food bowls too close to each other because this can sometimes upset the cats. Once they are comfortable with the door closed you can open the door a crack so that they can see each other while they are eating. This is better done with two people to watch each cat and if anything happens you can close the door quickly. Repeat this while opening the door wider each time until they are comfortable around each other while eating. You can even move to a baby gate or screen door as this process can take some time with certain cats.
- **Letting Your Cats Out Together:** Once your cats have mastered being around each other while eating with no adverse incidences then you can start letting them out together in the main area. Your house will need to be set up for multiple cats: have one more litter box than cats, different feeding stations, and many vertical spaces and hiding places. Make sure to let them have only supervised interaction at first until you can be sure that there are no aggressive reactions. Always have a treat or toy ready to distract if necessary.

Maintenance

- **Go Slow:** This process is set up to be gradual because you want to avoid any hostile or aggressive interaction between your cats. If you force interaction to quickly aggression or other bad behaviors will become habitual and the living situation will be very stressful for both you and your cats.
- **Precautions:** You will see mild forms of aggressive behavior so be the mediator and stop it before it escalates. If there are any hostile interacts go back a step and move forward more slowly. If a fight occurs between your two cats do not get in the middle because you can get severely injured! You can safely break two fighting cats up with water or a blanket.