



Introducing a New Cat to a Resident Cat

Introducing a new cat to your resident cat can be a delicate process. With patience and careful planning, you can increase the chances of peaceful cohabitation.

It's important for your new cat to be acclimated to their new space and people before starting the introduction process with the other animals in the home. Please see our handout "Introducing a New Cat to Your Home" for more information.

1. PREPARE A "SAFE ROOM" FOR THE NEW CAT

Before the introduction, provide your new cat with a separate room. Don't allow the cats to see or sniff each other on the way to the Safe Room, as this first interaction may lead to unwanted stress for both cats. You'll find detailed information about this space in the "Introducing a New Cat to Your Home" handout. This space should include:

- A litter box
- Food and water
- Scratching posts and toys
- Comfortable hiding spots

This helps the new cat adjust and feel safe without immediate pressure from the resident cat.

2. EXCHANGE SCENTS

Cats rely heavily on scent for identification and familiarity. To make the transition smoother:

- Rub a soft cloth on each cat's face and then place the cloth in the other cat's space to mix their scents.
- Swap bedding, toys, or other items between the two cats.
- Allow them to smell and explore each other's areas in the home without the other cat present before they meet face-to-face.
- Feed high value treats or meals on either side of the door to both cats at the same time.

This helps both cats familiarize themselves with each other's scent, building positive associations.

3. START WITH CONTROLLED VISUAL INTRODUCTIONS

Once the cats are comfortable with each other's scent, allow them to see one another:

- Use a baby gate, screen door, or slightly open a door so they can observe each other without direct contact.
- Watch for signs of aggression or curiosity. Hissing and growling are normal but should not escalate beyond vocalization.
- If either cat becomes stressed or vocalization continues for more than a few minutes, go back to scent swapping for a few more days.

4. SUPERVISED MEETINGS

When both cats seem calm during the visual introductions, you can move on to short, supervised meetings:

- Keep these interactions brief (5-10 minutes) and positive.
- Use treats and toys to encourage good behavior. Play time with wand toys can help distract from some of the initial stress the cats may have.
- Avoid forcing interactions.

Always supervise the first few meetings closely to prevent fights.

5. MONITOR BODY LANGUAGE

It's important to monitor both cats' behavior during introductions:

- Positive signs: Slow blinks, relaxed body posture, exploring without hesitation.
- Signs of stress or fear: Hissing, growling, swatting, ears pinned back, dilated pupils or arched back.

If either cat shows signs of stress, calmly separate the cats and return to an earlier step in the process.

6. ALLOW TIME FOR GRADUAL PROGRESS

The key to successful introductions is patience:

- Cats may take several weeks to months to adjust to each other fully. Let them explore and interact at their own pace.

7. MANAGING SETBACKS

Sometimes, introductions don't go smoothly:

- If there are aggressive encounters, separate the cats again and reintroduce them slowly.
- Don't punish either cat for hissing or growling; instead, remain calm and give them some time to adjust to one another so long as they don't escalate.

8. POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT

Encourage good behavior by rewarding calm or curious interactions with treats and praise:

- Use playtime to engage both cats and create positive associations.
- Gradually increase the length of their interactions as they become more comfortable with each other.

ADDITIONAL TIPS

- When cats have to share too few resources like litter boxes, food bowls, and water bowls, they may feel stressed and insecure, leading to conflict. Placing multiple resources throughout your home allows each cat to have their own space, helping them feel secure and relaxed.
- Ensure there are plenty of litterboxes throughout the home. One litter box per cat, plus an additional box placed throughout the home is recommended. Example: 2 cats=3 litter boxes, 4 cats=5 litter boxes.
- We recommend using scheduled mealtimes to support smooth cat introductions. Mealtimes will help keep cats focused and calm, as they'll be more interested in their meal than in potential conflicts with each other. This will also ensure that neither cat is bullied out of resources.
- Once the cats are coexisting in the same area, make sure to feed them at least a few feet apart, but ideally on opposite sides of the room, and supervise the mealtimes at least for a few months.

By taking a slow and patient approach, you can foster a peaceful and successful introduction between your new and resident cat. It's important to always observe their behavior and adjust as needed to create a harmonious environment for everyone involved.