

Introducing Your New Cat To Your Resident Cat

So, you have decided that your home needs a wonderful new addition. In order to ease the transition for everyone -- your resident cats, the new cat and yourself -- a little bit of preparation goes a long way. It is practically impossible to predict how two cats will get along because there are many factors that affect the relationship including size, age, breed, health, temperament and gender. They may become best friends in minutes or take months to develop a wary tolerance of each other.

In general, these guidelines will help make all steps of the transition easier:

- Proceed slowly and introduce new steps gradually. This will help minimize stress on everyone involved, both for the cats and you.
- Spend extra quality time with each cat.
- Watch your cat's behavior and watch out for fights. Small animals are more likely to be injured than larger animals.
- Give frightened pets a way to escape. Otherwise frightened animals may try to fight their way clear as they feel they have no other options.
- Consider your own safety before separating fighting animals.

Step One: The First Days At Home

Do not let the two cats intermingle at first. Instead, confine the new cat to its own room for several days. Give it food, water and a litter box, and ensure it has a comfortable place to sleep. Your new cat will be staying here for several days and this will be its safe place for the time being.

Both cats will sniff each other under the door. They will probably become angry and hiss once in a while. Eventually they will become comfortable with this arrangement or just ignore each other under the door.

Spend extra time with the new cat and your resident cat. Your resident cat will smell the new cat on your clothing and become familiar with it in the comfort of your presence.

Place the feeding bowls of both cats near the door in their respective rooms. Cats tend to be more tolerant and relaxed while eating. When both cats no longer hiss at each other through the door, gradually move the food bowls closer to the door each meal.

Step Two: Role Reversal

Confine your resident cat to a room where it spends most of its time. Provide the same comforts of home as you did for your new cat: food, litter box, water, and bedding if needed. Allow your new cat to explore the house for short periods of time. The new cat may be hesitant at first. If so, place the food dish in the doorway and allow it to acclimate to the door being open and eventually, it will explore. Gradually increase the length of time for these explorational forays.

Step Three: The First Face To Face

Prepare ahead of time by having a second litter box, food and water set up in another part of the house apart from those of your resident cat. (You can leave everything in the new cat's room with the door open if you wish.)

Be present at the actual initial face to face meeting. Expect plenty of hissing and hesitation. The cats may approach each other or not. Feed both of them at the same time far apart. Allow each cat to have an escape avenue. Gradually move the food bowls closer at each feeding and increase the cats' time together.

Step Four: It Takes Patience

Be patient. Some cats are less sociable than others. Most cats accept others with enough time. You simply need to allow them that time. If major problems occur at any point, slow down the process and repeat or back up a step if needed.

If your cats are constantly aggressive towards each other, see please call our veterinary office for more options to help ease the transition.