

Introducing A New Cat Into The Household

Throwing two cats into one environment without proper consideration of their positions is just asking for trouble. But, with a carefully planned introduction, cats can ease into accepting one another and may just become life long pals. Here are some tips to make the introduction go smoothly.

Keep Your Cats Separated At First

Set up a special isolation room for your new cat. This will provide your new pet with a safe place to get used to his/her surroundings and enable you to control how and when your two cats meet each other.

The special room for your new cat should have all the trappings of home – a litter box, food/water, some cozy hiding places, a scratching post and toys.

Your two cats should be able to smell and hear each other. You can do this by feeding both cats near the door to the new cat's isolation room so they learn to associate the smell and sound of each other with a positive experience. Doling out treats near the door is also a good idea.

After 2-3 days, some cat experts recommend trading the cats' locations so they can get used to each others' smells.

Many behaviorists advise rubbing the cats with the same towel to mix their scents. For example, use a clean sock to rub on the new cat's face to capture her facial pheromones. Then, leave the sock near the existing cat and let him/her investigate on their own.

After a few more days, the next step is to play with each of the cats near the door, building up positive associations with the scent of the other cat. This play, again, helps each cat associate the other cat with a good time.

If all seems to be going well and your cats aren't hissing or growling under the door at each other, after a week, you can try visually introducing the cats. Installing a screen door or even a high baby gate (that neither cat can jump over) can work. It's helpful to have another human with you so there is one person and one cat on either side of the barrier.

Continue feeding, playing with and giving the cats treats within view of the other cat(s), but don't force it! "If one cat won't eat her food right next to the screen, try moving the food dish a few feet away. Let the cats determine how close you move their dishes. If both cats are eating comfortably, try moving the dish a little closer, but don't be afraid to start off with the food dishes ten or more feet apart.

Make The Face-To-Face Introduction

The final step in the process is to let the cats be together, face-to-face, for supervised interaction. Don't worry if the cats completely ignore each other or hiss a bit and then walk away. It may take some time for your cats to learn that the other is a friend and not an enemy. Keep watching the cats and let them take things at their own pace as long as no one is starting to bully or harass the other. You should be able to gauge how it's going. If you sense one cat is harassing the other, don't be afraid to seek professional assistance from a behaviorist. Life is Better Rescue can help you find a behaviorist or trainer to help you.

It may take time and a bit of patience but your efforts have a good chance of being rewarded in the long run when your cats become content companions in your home for life.

