



Issue: Introducing a Cat to Another Cat

The only thing better than one cat is more cats! You've just adopted another furry feline friend and now you need to introduce them to your resident cat(s), what should you do?

It is best to give your new cat some time to settle in before you start any introductions. Your cats will know there are others in the house by smell; however, they don't need to be formally introduced just yet. Slow, gradual and positive introductions tend to work best for cats.

Please see flyer on “**New Home Adjustment Period**” for more information.

Introducing Your New Cat to the Resident One(s)

After your new cat has had some time to settle in, you can now start the introduction process. It's important to start the process slowly and at the pace of each individual cat.

You can begin by doing something we like to call **scent swapping**:

- Grab two cloths or blankets and rub one on the first cat's cheeks, and the other on the second cat.
- Now that the cloths have each cat's scent, give the opposite cloth to the other cat so they can get accustomed to the new smell in their own space.
- Use lots of positive reinforcement by giving a treat to each cat when they are near or sniffing the cloth.
- Once both cats are used to that scent, you can swap each cat's room. Bring some of the resident cat's belongings into the new cat's room and vice versa, so the cats don't feel like each other's territory is being taken over, but shared instead.
- Give a good amount of attention to each cat during this time period. Play is very important. Once a few days pass and both cats are relaxed, you can begin having them meet face to face, or rather door to door.

Door-to-Door Introductions

- Allow your cats to sniff each other through a closed door. You can encourage them to investigate by placing treats on both sides of the door. It'll be easier if you grab a family member so each of you can stay on one side of the door and

reward behaviors you want to see more of. If one cat sticks their paw through, reward both cats with treats.

- Try not to rush the process and allow them to explore on their own, rewarding each step of the way.
- Short, positive sessions are best so the cats are having fun the whole time.
- If you have multiple resident cats, doing one-on-one introductions through the door at first is best if possible. After that, the resident cats can be together on one side and the new pet on the other.

Door-to-Door Feeding Time:

- The best time to have these cats meet and interact is during feeding time. Meal time is rewarding for the cat so each meal can be used to build positive associations with the new cat.
- With both cats near the door, open the door just a crack so the cats can see each other but cannot go through. Again, it'll be easier if you have a family member help on the opposite side of the door so you can each monitor both cats' behavior.
- Feed both your new cat and the resident one behind opposite sides of this door, where they can smell each other and slightly see each other through the crack of the door.
- There may be some initial hissing or grumbling. Try to place the food far enough so both cats can eat comfortably and don't appear too tense.
- After a few days of this routine, when both cats' body postures appear to be more comfortable and both cats are eating calmly, open the door and put up a see-through barrier, like a baby gate, screen door or dog pen.
 - Continue feeding on opposite sides of the barrier, and gradually move the food bowls closer to the barrier each day until the cats are able to eat comfortably near one another.
- Try not to rush the process! It's okay if the cats need more time or more distance to feel comfortable.
 - Make sure each session ends on a positive note, with lots of positive reinforcement. If one cat focuses more on the other cat instead of the food, move the bowls further away until they feel comfortable. Only move the bowls closer to the other cat if you see that the cats are more relaxed or more focused on the food rather than each other. Use special high value food both cats don't get very often so they'd associate the new cat with something extra positive.

Now, it's time to meet!

Once the three (or more) of you feel comfortable enough, you can begin to remove the gate and introduce play. Monitor both cats' reactions when they're in the same room together. If they look at each other and give no concerning reactions, give each cat a

treat. As they get used to being around each other, you can begin to play with both at the same time. A fishing pole-type toy would work best for this.

Bonding/Quality Time

Once your new cat has adjusted to the home and your resident cat(s) has become accustomed to their newest family member, continue to make sure each cat is comfortable in the home and monitor their behavior together. The goal is to have both cats share spaces around the home without being bothered by each other. Not all cats will become best friends, but our main goal is for them to co-exist peacefully in a shared home.

For information on how to introduce cats to dogs, please see our **“Introducing Cat to Dog”** flyer.

For more information:

International Association of Animal Behavior Consultants: m.iaabc.org

Certified Applied Animal Behaviorists: corecaab.org