



## Introducing Your New Cat to Other Cats

Before you decide to bring home a new cat, be aware: if your resident cat becomes aggressive when he/she sees other cats outside of your home, you will probably have a difficult time introducing a new cat into your household. If your resident cat has lived harmoniously with other cats in the past, the odds are better that he/she will adjust to a newcomer. However, it is impossible to predict whether or not two individual cats will get along with each other. There are no reliable guides to help predict the best matches between cats. The individual personalities of the cats are more important than any factor such as sex, age, or size. The most important thing to remember when you are bringing a new cat into your home; **BE PATIENT!** The introductions must be gradual, relaxed, and slow!

### Step 1: Controlling First Impressions

The first impression a new cat makes when she meets your resident cat is critical. For this reason, it's best to separate your resident cat from your new cat when you first bring her home so that you can control their initial meeting.

- The two cats should be able to smell and hear—but not see or touch—each other. We recommend keeping them in separate rooms with a door in between them.
- Each cat should have her own food and water bowl, litter box, scratching post, bed, etc.
- Feed the cats near the door that separates them so they learn that coming together (even though they can't see each other) results in a pleasant experience.
- In addition to regular cat food, feed the cats extra-special treats near the door as well, like tiny pieces of tuna, salmon, cheese, chicken or liver.
- Each day, switch the cats' locations so they can investigate each other's smell. This also allows the new cat to explore a different section of your home.
- You can also take toys and bedding from one cat's area and place it in with the other cat to help them adjust to the other cat's scent even more.
- Each day play with each of the cats near the door. Encourage them to paw at toys under the door. Eventually the cats may play "paws" under the door with each other.

## **Step 2: Letting the Cats See Each Other**

After a week or so, (assuming that you see no signs of aggression at the door: hissing, growling, etc.), you can introduce the cats to each other.

- One method for this is to use two baby gates positioned in the door jam, one above the other. Ask a friend or family member to help you with the introduction. Have one cat and one person on each side of the door, and start the introduction by setting each cat down a few feet away from the screen or gates.
- When the cats notice each other, say their names and toss treats to them, aiming the treats behind them.
- Over the next few days, continue to encourage feeding, eating treats and playing near the barrier, gradually offering the cats' meals, treats and toys closer to the screen.

## **Step 3: Letting the Cats Spend Time Together**

The next stage is to permit the cats to spend time together without a barrier between them. Supervise these initial face-to-face interactions carefully.

- It's good to bring the cats together when they are likely to be relatively calm, such as after a meal or strenuous play.
- As the cats become more familiar with each other, allow them longer and longer periods of time together.

### **Lastly...**

Following the initial introductions, it can take a very long time for a real relationship to grow between two cats. It takes most cats 8 to 12 months to develop a friendship with a new cat. Although some cats certainly can become close and loving friends, others may never bond with each other. Many cats who don't become friends learn to avoid each other, but in some cases the cats will fight when introduced and the fighting will continue until it is necessary to rehome one of the cats. Even if you do everything right, some cats just may never get along.

### **Final Tips and Advice**

1. If you're bringing a new cat into a household with multiple cats, introduce each resident cat to the newcomer individually. After each of your cats has met the new cat one-on-one, you can start to allow all of the cats to mingle as a group.
2. If one of your cats is spending most of its time hiding from the other, or if one is continually harassing or pursuing the other, please try seeking the advice of a Professional Feline Behaviorist (CAAB, ACAAB, or ACVB) or Behavior Consultant.
3. Your cats will be more likely to get along if they're happy in their environment. Some like to sit up high, on shelves and on kitty condo perches. Frightened cats, on

the other hand, tend to hide under and behind things, so make sure you provide spots at floor level as well. Place food, water and litter boxes out in the open so your cats don't feel trapped when they access these resources. Make sure you have a litter box for each cat, plus at least one extra.

- a. Look at the layout of your home. Make sure there are plenty of hiding spots for your cats.
- b. For climbers, have lots of shelves and runways available for them up or the floor so they can feel same. Make sure these paths do not dead end where one cat could trap the other. Have multiple escape routes.
- c. For nervous cats who like caves, build hidey holes into shelves. Cat towers with built in boxes are also great. Also, provide them with lots of enclosed kitty beds to soak in their scent to help them feel secure.