



introducing a new cat

When it comes to introducing another cat to your home, it is true that “slow and steady wins the race”! Taking a gradual, patient approach increases the likelihood that the cats will eventually become friends.

Recommendations to guide the process:

1. Keep the new cat in a room by themselves for at least 2-3 days. Provide litter box, food/water, toys, and a comfortable place to sleep in the room. Visit the new cat often, but let them come to you on their own terms. Even though your first cat will be curious about the new kitty, resist the urge to introduce them immediately.

****Tip:** Keep your first cat's routine as consistent as possible. Do not move their litter box, food, or favorite items to another location when the new cat arrives. Maintaining your cat's routine will avoid extra stress during the introduction process.

2. Feed both cats at the same time, placing their bowls on opposite sides of the door. By doing this, the cats will be able to smell each other while eating (which is positive reinforcement). After the first day, take a blanket or cat bed from each cat and swap it with the other cat. This will help them become familiar with each other's scent in a non-threatening way.
3. If both cats are calm and eating well after the first few days, slightly open the door so the cats can meet face-to-face. If you have a baby gate or another fence-like barrier, you can use it so the cats can see each other, but not touch. A little hissing and growling is normal when cats first meet. Don't worry about this, unless it escalates into a physical fight.
4. If the face-to-face introduction goes well, then allow the new cat to explore the house and interact with your other cat for a few minutes or hours (depending on how things go). It is helpful to give your cat “breaks” from the new cat throughout the next few days. Particularly if your first cat seems nervous or stressed, put the new cat back in his room for awhile so both cats can decompress. Repeat this process and build-up the amount of time they are together.

****Tip:** Offer the cats high-value treats (tuna, canned food, etc.) each time they interact. The goal is to help your first cat create a positive association with the new one: new cat = treats.

5. If the face-to-face introduction does NOT go well, the new cat may need to stay in his room for several more days. Using a barrier like a baby gate or cracked door for while may also be necessary. Be patient and understand that some cats can be introduced within a few days, whereas other cats may need several weeks. Even after the cats are fully introduced and getting along, your first cat may still need occasional "breaks" from the new cat for awhile. Monitor the cats' body language and stress level and make changes according to their needs.

6. Once the cats are acclimated to each other, create an environment that promotes them getting along. Add at least one more litter box to the home, placing the boxes in separate areas if possible. Most veterinarians recommend having one litter box for every cat PLUS one more (for 2 cats, 3 boxes is ideal). Some cats are happy to share a food bowl, but others prefer to be fed separately. If one cat is more playful than the other, play with him daily to get his energy out. This will help deter him from pouncing on the other cat to initiate play. Access to vertical height (cat towers, bookshelves, etc.) encourages cats to perch up high and feel confident, and provides an escape route if one cat wants to avoid the other.