



Cat Introductions

The first meeting between a resident cat and a new cat should be positive. Remember, not only is your new cat acclimating to a new home and family, your resident cat is acclimating to having a new sibling! By giving each cat a safe place of their own and gradually doing the introduction, you are setting them up for success.

Set up the rooms for the cats ahead of time. Each cat should have their own room with toys, scratch pads, places to climb and hide, along with a food and water bowl. Rule of thumb for litter boxes? One per cat plus one additional litter box.

When introducing cats, slow and steady wins the race! As cat behavior expert Pamela Johnson- Bennett says, "Do it one sense at a time."

During the process, if the cats react in a negative way, go back to the previous step. Short sessions work best, split throughout the day:

- Taste- Food rewards will help build a good association.
- Hearing- Reward before the cats ever lay eyes on each other. When they hear movement from the other side of the room- reward!
- Smell- During the first two week, wet food can be fed in short sessions only when the other cat is around. One person feeds new cat from one end of door, and the other feeds the long term cat on the other side. You can also use scent by doing a toy and blanket exchange and by swapping the room that you are keeping each cat. This allows them to explore and adjust at their pace.
- Sight- The next step is to open the door just a tiny crack, giving both cats limited visual access to each other. Eventually you open the door a crack and practice the feeding behind the cracked door. Open the door a bit more each day if you are making progress. Remember, you cannot move too slowly. You will have the rest of their lives to let them interact closely!
- Touch- Use play and attention (at your cat's comfort) to break up the stress and have fun. This also helps with the bonding process.

When you feel that both cats are ready for the "official" introduction, take a deep breath and be calm! If you are worried and tense, the cats will probably be too. Pick a time of day that is calm and quiet. Do the meeting in a room with plenty of space and places to

escape. Always have a nice thick blanket or towel in case the cats do not get along. Tossing the blanket on top of the cat and scooping the cat up will help prevent you from getting bitten or scratched. Never punish the cats if the meeting is not as anticipated, this will just give them a negative association with each other. Just try again the next day or if you are not comfortable go back to the above steps. If the first meeting goes well, keep it short and sweet. Each day, add more time in which the cats hang out together. Reward frequently for any calm and friendly behavior.



Products such as Feliway or essential oils can help de-stress the cats. These products have different results for every cat, as each is unique. We use Blackwing Farms products and Feliway at the shelter, but there are many different brands to research.

Once cats have had a successful introduction continue praising and rewarding for good behavior. Give each cat one on one time with you and away from the other cats.

Recommended Reading:

Cat vs. Cat: Keeping Peace When You Have More Than One Cat by Pam Johnson-Bennett

If you have questions along the way, please contact our behavior staff at:
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