



INTRODUCING YOUR NEW CAT TO YOUR PETS

If your new cat is going to be a companion to your existing cat(s) or dog(s), you should expect it to take some time before they are used to each other. It can be a matter of days, weeks, or even months, depending on the personalities of the animals involved. While there is no foolproof way to make animals become friends, we advise you to play it safe and introduce the new cat to your house and pets slowly to prevent fearful and aggressive behaviors from developing. Remember, if these behaviors are allowed to become habits, they can be difficult to change. Here are some guidelines to help introduce your cat to your pets:

Introducing a New Cat to Other Cats

- Isolation.** Place your cat, for the first few days, in a small, enclosed room (usually the bathroom) that has minimal hiding places. Remember to also have food, water, and a litter box in the same room. Since cats love small places, it will be easier for them to adjust in a smaller room, and the bathroom allows them to become acquainted with your scent and the scent of your pets, while avoiding eye contact with your pets.
- Scent Introduction.** Place your new cat's carrier in a room your existing pets frequent to let them become acquainted with their new house-mate's scent. Also, consider switching sleeping blankets beneath your new cat and resident cats.
- Toy Introduction.** Place a toy or food on either side of the door of the room where your new cat is. This allows your cats to play with each other through the door, and helps them associate their new house-mates with fun activities.
- Home Introduction.** Allow your cat increasing access to your home as she adjusts to her new environment. Generally, this is easiest to do when the other cats are confined to a room. This allows your new cat to become acclimated to the new environment without the added stress of meeting your other cats.
- Sight Introduction.** Place a baby gate across the doorway of a room that you are keeping your new cat in. This allows your cats to meet each other face-to-face, but prevents fighting and other behaviors. Carefully monitor this interaction, as some cats are very happy to jump baby gates.
- Full Introduction.** Allow your cats to meet, usually one at a time, once they exhibit a minimum of growling, hissing and posturing through the baby gate. (Be sure to trim their nails first!) Take your existing cats elsewhere, and open the baby gate to let your new cat explore the house and encounter your other cats. You should expect some hissing, spitting and growling, but do not interfere directly if a fight breaks out. Instead, squirt them with water, distract them by clapping your hands or banging pots, or throwing a blanket over them and picking them up. This helps them associate fighting with unpleasant options, and hopefully they prefer not to fight in the future.
- Adjusting.** Leave your cats separated when you are not home until you are sure they are comfortable with each other. Soon, your cats will establish a pecking order and settle down.

Introducing a New Cat to Dogs

Use the techniques outlined above when introducing your new cat to your dog(s), but keep your dog on a leash and sitting or laying down during the full introduction. Dogs usually want to chase and play with cats, and cats respond by being afraid or defensive, but these behaviors can be avoided.

- Full Introduction.** Put your dog's leash on, and command him to either sit or lay down and stay, supplementing your commands with treats. Have another family member enter the opposite side



of the room, and sit quietly with your new cat on his or her lap. Offer the cat some treats to keep it mellow. Repeat this multiple times until the pets are accustomed to the other's presence. Next, move the animals a little closer together. If your cat doesn't like to be held, place it in her carrier. If the cat becomes frightened, increase the distance between the animals. Be sure to praise your dog and give him or her treats. If your dog is always being punished when the cat is around, they will only associate cats with bad things happening. Given time, eventually your pets will meet face-to-face, and if done carefully, you will minimize fighting.