

HOW TO INTRODUCE CATS TO EACH OTHER



- Read this information
- Read the SAFE Cat Care Guide [Settling your new cat into your home](https://www.saferehoming.com.au/wp-content/uploads/Settling-your-new-cat-into-your-homeV2.pdf) <https://www.saferehoming.com.au/wp-content/uploads/Settling-your-new-cat-into-your-homeV2.pdf> in conjunction with this information
- Watch the Jackson Galaxy videos
 - [How to introduce cats](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tsYT7yl) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tsYT7yl>
 - [Cat Introductions: First Impressions are a must](https://youtube.com/watch?v=ojS7XwtoXtw) <https://youtube.com/watch?v=ojS7XwtoXtw>
 - [When cat introductions get ugly](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZUCvUFmDFE) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZUCvUFmDFE>
 - [DON'T LET IT HAPPEN](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yOJv6n2ZHgw) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yOJv6n2ZHgw>



Cats are solitary animals - NOT TRUE! - If introduced properly cats can become best friends and even if that doesn't happen they can learn to appreciate the comfort and company of the other cat, even if only from afar.

They'll work it out if we just put them in the same room - NOT TRUE! - At best they might seem to be OK with each other at first, but issues such as marking territory by urinating in inappropriate places, might arise down the track and these will be harder to solve. At worst you might have a cat fight on your hands & both cats will be stressed and traumatised. Cats need to be introduced gradually so expect it to take as long as it takes. The more time you take at the start to help them adjust to having each other around for good, the better the outcome will be.

Before you bring the new cat home

- Make sure your existing cat has a routine with meals & playtime at the same time every day. If you usually leave out dry food for them to graze on, stop doing that and establish regular mealtimes
- Set up a Safe Room for your new cat
- 'Catify' your home – provide hiding spots in both the Safe Room and the main area of your home. You might have a scratching post with a hiding box or you can make your own hiding places by turning cardboard boxes on their sides and covering them with a blanket; you need to block off any narrow or inaccessible spaces where a cat can hide out of reach



DON'T LET THE CATS SEE EACH OTHER

- Cover the carrier with a towel & take your new cat into their Safe Room - it's really important that the cats have no eye contact
- Open the carrier in the Safe Room and then leave to give the new cat time to explore on their own
- Be extra careful when entering and leaving the Safe Room. If the new cat escapes this could turn into a sudden, unprepared, negative interaction with your resident cat
- Give your resident cat lots of attention so they aren't stressed about another cat arriving in their territory. Through their sense of smell both cats will know there is another cat in the house and that's enough for them at first

Allow the new cat time to get used to their new home

Leave them alone in their Safe Room for long periods to explore. You should only move onto the next step when they are eating, drinking, & toileting comfortably and interacting with you confidently. Some cats may seem ready to move into the rest of the house after a couple of days but we recommend that they stay in their Safe Room for at least a week to be truly comfortable. Some cats take longer than others so don't be tempted to rush them.

When your new cat is relaxed in their Safe Room after a week you can start to introduce the cats indirectly through smell

Work your way through the following exercises. Don't do them all in the same day but rather repeat each exercise until you feel the cats are comfortable and not reactive

Socks and smell - rub a clean sock on your resident cat's cheeks and face (where the scent glands are), go into the Safe Room and close the door. Put the sock on the floor. If the new cat walks near the sock give it a high value reward (such as roast chicken, cat treats, cheese or a small part of the daily food allowance). Then rub another sock on the new cat's face and cheeks, leave the Safe Room and put the sock on the floor near your resident cat. If they walk towards it give them a similar reward. Please note the cats don't have to sniff or touch the sock to get a reward - just walking towards it is enough

Give the cats a reason to like each other through food

- Put a small amount of their favourite food in two bowls. Put the bowl for the new cat about a metre from the door in the Safe Room. Leave the room, close the door and put your resident cat's food bowl about a metre on the other side. The cats can now eat at the same time. If either cat doesn't eat, this means they are feeling challenged & uncomfortable so you will need to move each bowl need further back from the door until they will eat. It's better to do this in several short sessions during the day so that you end on a positive note.

- Take the bowls nearer little by little every few days. If you approach their 'challenge line' in a controlled, constructive way they will adjust gradually but if you move the bowls too close too quickly one cat may stop eating & then you'll need to move them back further from the door again.
- As the bowls get nearer you could open the door a little more and eventually put up a baby gate. Because they will now be in full view of each other you will need to move the bowls right back to a metre on either side of the gate and start the process of moving them in gradually again. You need to make sure that the cats can't get to one another so if either of them tries to rush the door, use a door stop or a temporary hook-and-eye on the door to prevent it from fully opening all the way

When the cats will eat comfortably within sight of each other you can supervise them in the same space for short periods of time

- Put the cats in the same room but at a distance for a few minutes. Leave the door to the Safe Room open so that the new cat can run to safety if they need to. Try to give them both a positive experience whilst the other cat is in their peripheral vision - if you have help you could play with each cat in different parts of the room & give them lots of high value treats. This way they don't have to compete or feel intimidated by each other and they get to enjoy their time being in the same room. If you don't have help you can hold a wand toy in each hand and parallel play with a cat on either side
- The cats might ignore each other or they might hiss and spit and/or swish their tail, but this is OK & it probably won't develop any further. Don't do anything if this happens but watch their body language and if they start to stare at the other cat or move towards them with their ears back, distract them by speaking loudly, clapping and/or distracting them with a wand toy. You could also put yourself inbetween the cats to break their concentration but if they actually fight don't try to separate them with your hands. The new cat will probably return to their Safe Room if you steer the resident cat in the opposite direction

How to manage ongoing interaction when the cats are spending more time together

Don't force the cats to interact with each other as they need to get used to sharing the same territory in their own time

You need to avoid a stare-down. Once the cats lock eyes there's trouble ahead! Distraction is the key. Both cats need to feel safe & confident they can't be ambushed by the other cat, and it helps if they can see all around them and have an exit route which avoids the other cat

- Set up the space so that they can both cats can be comfortable. Some cats use vertical territory to display status, and getting up high can often prevent physical confrontations. If they have tall scratching post(s), perches and hideaways this creates different levels and increases the areas for jumping, sitting, playing & getting away from one another
- You will need at least two litter trays and more than one scratching post/vertical space in the main room. The trays and safe places should be in different areas of the room/house so that the cats can avoid crossing each other's paths to get to them. Cats are happy if given a choice and this helps to establish a peaceful co-existence
- Make the environment interesting for them so they can release energy and have fun! Make your own toys, set up food-dispensing toys, puzzle toys and other things for them to play with when you're not there. A bird feeder outside the window or some cat shelves for climbing and playing will enrich their space and ease tension
- At mealtimes the cats should eat in the presence of each other but in different places, not next to each other. Watch for any bullying or harassment as it can take some time for them to learn that they can be friends and not enemies

Be patient - tolerance between cats is an excellent start & it may take months for a new relationship to develop. If you're not patient enough it could get VERY UGLY

Common problems

- Moving to the next step too quickly
- Reading body language incorrectly
- Not supervising the cats in the first few weeks together - you may need to take control & re-direct them before it gets to a stare-down



Please call us at any time if you have any questions or need more information