

INTRODUCING A NEW CAT TO YOUR RESIDENT CAT



Introducing cats to one another has to be a gradual process so expect it to take quite a while as you don't want the experience to be stressful for the cats or the family!

The more time you take at the start to get them used to the fact that they're both here for good, the better the outcome will be. If you just put them together straight away there's a chance that it might work, but most likely it won't!

Like people, cats are individuals and some take an instant dislike to each other. However, with patience and time, even cats that don't really get on, can learn to live with each other and find comfort in having another cat around.

Things to note

- Let the cat get used to its room first so it can feel safe there.
- Be careful when entering and leaving the new cat's room - if they escape this could turn into a sudden, unprepared, negative interaction with your resident cat.
- If you are used to leaving food out for your resident cat to graze on - STOP! You need to use food from now on to control behaviour.

Take it step by step. When the new cat arrives, both cats will be aware of each other's presence. Your new cat will need to get comfortable within the confines of its safe room so leave it alone for long periods to explore. As long as you give your resident cat lots of attention it won't be too stressed at this stage as only a small part of its territory has become out of bounds..

First steps

- Once you are confident that your new cat is relaxed in its safe room you can start to expose both cats **indirectly** to each other.
- **You need to give the cats a reason to like each other.** Frequent feeding sessions are best with each cat on either side of the closed door. Co-ordinate it so that both cats are eating on either side of the door at the same time. If either cat won't come to the bowl, move it further away from the door. When it feels the bowl is at a comfortable distance it will eat. In subsequent sessions you can *gradually* move the bowls closer and closer to the door. Don't offer too much food during each training session. It's better to do frequent sessions that are short and that end on a positive note.
- **The next stage is to get your cats used to each other's smell. There are different ways to do this:**
 1. Take a clean sock and rub it on your resident cat's cheeks and face (where the scent glands are), then take it to the new cat's room and put it on the floor. When the new cat walks near the sock give it a reward. Take the other sock, rub it on the new cat's face and cheeks and then put it down near your resident cat and if it comes near or walks by the sock, give it a reward. Please note the cats do not have to be sniffing or touching the sock - just walking in the same direction is enough for reward. Rewards can be cat treats, a high value treat such as roast chicken or a small part of the daily food allowance.
 2. Put your resident cat in another room, make sure all outside doors are closed and everyone is aware that you are going to let the new cat out. Open the door of its safe room and allow it to come out if it wants. If it doesn't want to come out don't force it, just close the door after a short time and try again later. If you can introduce the new cat gradually to your house by closing off different parts that's ideal. Make sure you watch your cat as it's surprising where they can end up! After about 10 minutes put the new cat back into its room and let your resident cat out. Repeat several times throughout the day.
 3. Put your new cat into another room and allow your resident cat into the new cat's room to have a sniff around. Have treats handy to reward.
 4. Put the new cat in a closed cat carrier and cover three sides with a blanket. Put it in the main part of the house and let your resident cat sniff around if so inclined. After 10 minutes put the new cat back into its room. Now put your resident cat in the carrier, take it into the cat's room and let them sniff around it.

- Meanwhile continue to feed the cats on either side of the door, getting closer all the time until you can open it - just a crack during the feeding sessions. You might have to move the bowls back again so that they are eating within sight of each other but far enough apart so they don't feel threatened. Do short sessions with very small amounts of food and then close the door. It's better to do several short sessions a day that end on a positive note rather than attempting one long session when a fight may break out. If one cat always tries to bolt through the door, use a door stop to prevent it from fully opening. You can also put a temporary hook-and-eye on the door. As they progress you can progress to using a baby gate. Start the process again with the bowls quite far from each other on either side of the gate and move them in gradually

The final phase is when the cats can be together in the same space when supervised & for short periods of time.

- You could put the new cat on a harness and walk it around the house when the resident cat is around.
- If you feel that they are sufficiently used to each other and somewhat relaxed in each other's company, you might put them in the same area for a few minutes. They may ignore each other or there may be some hissy-spitty behaviour and some tail swishing at first but that's OK just leave them -watch their body language and if it gets too physical or aggressive distract them by speaking loudly, clapping and/or taking one cat away.
- Use playtime as a way to help the cats have positive experiences with each other. Have parallel play time with a wand-type toy in each hand or enlist the help of another family member. This way, each cat has their own toy and they don't have to compete or feel intimidated by the other. When you use two toys they get to enjoy the game while seeing the other cat in their peripheral vision.

How to manage ongoing interaction

When the cats are spending more time together, it's important to set up the environment so that they are both comfortable. If you increase the vertical territory in the environment your cat will think they have more territory. Some cats also use vertical territory as a way to display status and it can often avert an actual physical confrontation. Giving them the opportunity to establish their own separate territories within the same space makes them feel safe because they can see around them and know they can't get ambushed from behind. Use tall scratching posts, perches and hideaways to create low, medium and high levels for them to sit and play.

You can also use enrichment to divert their attention, release energy and have fun! Set up food-dispensing toys, puzzle toys and other things for them to play with on their own. A bird feeder outside the window or some cat shelves for climbing and playing will enrich their environment and ease tension.

You will need to have at least two litter trays and more than one scratching post/vertical space. The trays and safe places should be in different places so that the cat's can avoid crossing paths. Cat's are happy if given a choice and this helps establish a peaceful co-existence.

At mealtimes the cats can eat in the presence of each other but in separate areas. Watch for any bullying or harassment as it can take some time for them to learn to be friends and not enemies.

Be patient - it may take months for a new relationship to develop but tolerance between cats is an excellent start!

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



*This information is intended as a general guide only

Rehoming organisation number R215000093

sb/infosheetsapril2020