

Bringing Your New Cat Home

Introducing a cat to a new home can be very stressful for the cat because cats do not like change. To help ease some of this stress, follow these few suggestions:

1. When you bring your new cat home, place the carrier in the room and open the door. Do not force the cat to come out, let her take her time. Your new cat needs time to adjust to her new surroundings.
2. Be available to your new cat but do not force interaction. Let the cat come to you. Have some food treats with you to make a positive association.
3. If your cat hides - leave her/him alone. She/he will come out when she/he feels safe. This could take a few days. Make sure she/he always has access to food, water and a litterbox.

Introduction to resident cat

If you have other cats in the house its a good idea to set up a safe room for the new cat. Before you bring your new cat home, prepare a quiet room with a litter box, food, water, toys, and scratching post. This arrangement will allow the cats to get used to one another's scent before they actually meet (they will sniff under the door).

1. Scent exchange - A technique that can help with the exchanging of scents is for you to pet each cat several times a day with a washcloth or a sock on your hand and leave it in the room with the opposite cat each night.
2. Offer a dish of tuna fish to each cat on either side of the door at about the same time every day (cats like routine). This will help form a positive association between the cats.

Once your new cat seems comfortable in the safe room, you can slowly introduce the cats to each other. The introduction process should go as follows:

1. Switch positions - let your new cat explore the house and put your resident cat in the new cat's room. This will allow them to further investigate each other's scent. This also gives the new cat the opportunity to get to know the entire house. Do this daily for a week.

2. Place two baby gates in the door opening (one on top of the other so they can't jump over) so they can see each other but not get to each other. Place food treats on either side of the gates. If they hiss, growl, or swat at each other, close the door and try again later. This is to be expected, so don't give up.
3. When the visits through the baby gates are going well, allow them some short supervised visits (half an hour at first). Setting out two dishes of tuna fish in a room can help encourage them into the same room and form a positive association.
4. Continue doing these short sessions, increasing the amount of time the cats are together.
5. Never punish the cats for being aggressive towards one another. This will just make them more upset and associate bad things with the other cat. Some hissing and swatting should be expected while they work out their territories. If things get out of hand, calmly separate the cats.
6. Expect it to take from 2 weeks to 2 months or more for the cats to establish the rules of territory with each other.
7. Feliway Calming Pheromone Diffusers can help with the transition. You can buy them at Amazon.

Introduction to resident dog

If you have a dog at home it is a good idea to set up a safe room for the new cat as described above. When the cat is comfortable in her safe room, allow her to explore the rest of the house for short periods of time when the dog is outside. When she seems comfortable in the house its time to have her meet the dog.

Make sure the dog is under control when interacting with the new cat. When the cat is on a high surface, bring in the dog on leash. Walk the dog around the room but don't let him off the leash. Do not allow the dog to act inappropriately with the cat (barking, lunging, chasing). Start with half hour visits and then return the cat to the safe room. Slowly increase the amount of time you allow these supervised visits. Always reward friendly visits with praise, food treats, and play. Make a positive association for both of them. Do not rush the introduction or force them to be together.