

INTRODUCING A NEW CAT TO A RESIDENT CAT

It is **ESSENTIAL** to introduce cats to other cats very slowly and gradually. Cats are territorial and they must get comfortable with each other through scent and from a safe distance before they meet face to face. **DO NOT** make the mistake of just putting them together and letting them “work it out”. It is unlikely to be successful and can be dangerous.

By following the process below, you can minimize the stress involved with integrating a new cat into a household of one or more cats.

- First, set up a separate room where the new cat will live throughout the introduction process. The room needs to have food and water, litter box (placed far away from food and water as possible), a comfortable bed and scratcher. The cat or kitten will also need hiding places in order to feel secure – these can be created easily using cardboard boxes placed on their sides and lined with towels. It’s a good idea to have some elevated territory such as a cat tree or perch. You can also use a Feliway diffuser or spray to help calm the cat in their new environment. Be sure to cat-proof the room, removing dangling cords, breakable items, etc.
- At the beginning of the introduction process be sure to wash your hands after spending time with the new cat so that your resident cat is not threatened by the new cat’s scent on you. You might want to consider a Feliway diffuser in the area outside the new cat’s room as well.
- Starting the introduction process with scent. Gently rub one clean sock or soft washcloth on the cat around their mouth and head. Do the same thing with another sock or cloth on the resident cat. Another alternative, you can use each cat’s bedding assuming they’ve slept on it. Then put the new cat’s item in the resident cat’s area and vice versa. Give each cat treats as it investigates the other’s washcloth, bedding, etc. This will help them develop positive associations with the unfamiliar scent. Continue this for several days (or longer) until they are both calm and comfortable with the other’s scent.
- After each cat is completely accustomed to the other’s scent put the resident cat in her own separate room and let the new cat out to explore and rub their scent on objects in the house. Then return the new cat’s scent in her environment. Move on to the next step only after both cats are comfortable.
REMEMBER TO GIVE THE RESIDENT CAT AND THE NEW CAT PLENTY OF ATTENTION, PLAYTIME AND TREATS THROUGHOUT THE PROCESS.
- For the next step, crack open the door to the new cat’s room just a little so the cats can see each other at a safe distance. Feed each cat their meal on their side of the door, closing the door again after each meal. Very gradually move the bowls closer together as the cats become more accustomed to eating near each other. **IT’S BEST TO HAVE PEOPLE DOING THIS – ONE WITH EACH CAT.**
- After the cats are comfortable eating near each other, move on to the next step. Open the door enough so that they can see each other; play with the cats and give each of them treats while still maintaining some distance between them. Again, it is best to have two people involved during this phase. Gradually keep the door open longer and longer until they are comfortable with each other. Always supervise the cats until they become friendly with each other.
- The amount of time for the introduction process can vary. It may take several weeks or longer. If at any time either cat becomes fearful or aggressive, separate them and start the process over again. **BE PATIENT.** The introduction process will set the groundwork for how well the cats get along in the future.
- Keep the separate rooms available for the new cat for as long as the cat needs it. Also be sure to add a new litter box – one litterbox per cat plus one more as a spare (and not all in the same room).

INTRODUCING A NEW CAT TO A DOG

Introducing cats and dogs must be done with EXTREME CAUTION. Dogs can easily injure or kill a cat, even if they are only playing. Also, dogs and cats play differently. A dog's desire to chase and wrestle can easily be interpreted by a cat – especially a new one – as threatening behavior. When the frightened cat runs away the dog might see this as an invitation to play. This can have deadly consequences.

By following the process outlined below, you can minimize the stress involved with integrating a new cat into a household with a dog.

- Start the introduction process very slowly, use the same steps outlined in *the Introducing a New Cat to a Resident Cat*. First keep both pets completely separated and allow them to get accustomed to each other's scent before ever seeing each other. Proceed only after each pet is comfortable with the other's scent.
- Before starting to introduce the dog and cat to each other, be sure the dog is well-trained to obey commands. Also, the dog must be relaxed and calm – having worked off any excess energy before beginning the introduction and **keep the dog on a leash and under your control at all times**.
- The cat must have a known escape route (including elevated places such as a tall cat tree, high tables or shelves, etc.) and place a that's inaccessible to the dog (such as a separate room with a baby gate or cat door). Be sure the cat is familiar with these escape areas before the dog is present.
- By bringing both pets into a neutral area (separate from the cat's room) and situating them on opposite sides of the room. It is best to have a person with the dog and another person with the cat (but not holding or restraining the cat). Have the dog sit or lie down and focus his attention on you rather than the cat. The dog must at all times, totally ignore the cat and not make any move toward the cat. Reward the dog with praise, treats, etc. while the other person rewards the cat's calm and relaxed behavior in a similar manner.
- After a short period of time, return the cat to their separate room. Repeat this process in short sessions each day until the dog and cat are both relaxed and calm in each other's presence. Gradually decrease the distance between them over subsequent days (or weeks or months, if necessary) as long as they both are comfortable and calm, letting the cat approach the dog at their own pace while the dog remains in place. If at any time the cat shows any signs of being uncomfortable or fearful, or if the dog shows signs of aggression or even appears too assertive with the cat, separate them immediately and go back through the previous steps slowly.
- Throughout the entire introduction process and even afterward, keep the dog on a leash and with you whenever the cat is free in the house, making sure the cat always has the familiar escape routes and hiding places that are inaccessible to the dog. **Also, keep them separated when you are not home. DO NOT leave the dog and cat together unsupervised until the dog is properly trained and you are absolutely sure they get along.** In addition, BE AWARE that even with proper training some dogs (such as those which are more energetic or have a strong prey drive) should never be left alone with a cat.
- **Even after the introduction process is finished, maintain the cat's escape routes and hiding places.** Also keep the cat's food away from the dog, perhaps on an elevated area that cat can reach easily but that is inaccessible to the dog. Keep the cat's litter box completely off-limits to the dog.