

Cat-Cat Introductions

Cats are a facultatively social species, which means they can adapt to both a solitary lifestyle and to living with other felines, depending on their current environment and their upbringing. Many cats' enrichment needs can be better met if they have another cat to interact with; however, if a proper introduction is not done, it can cause additional stress.

GOOD FELINE CANDIDATES FOR LIVING WITH RESIDENT CAT:

- Cats who have previously lived with other cats
- Younger felines

The most important thing to consider, however, is the personality and behavior of both cats. If you have an older cat who isn't playful and likes to spend most of their time sleeping, a rambunctious kitten isn't going to go over well. Instead, you should consider getting another older, mellow cat. If you have a cat who is very confident and assertive, you will want to avoid getting another cat who will compete with the personality- if you get a second assertive cat, there is more chance for conflict; you should instead look for an easy-going and friendly feline. You want to look for a cat whose personality compliments your own feline, rather than being the exact opposite or exactly the same.

Steps for Introduction

STEP 1: SEPARATION

Set up your new cat in a room that your resident cat does not have access to; a secondary bedroom or office is ideal. They should have access to all resources and enrichment, such as litter box, scratching post, bed, etc. At meal times, feed each cat on opposite sides of the door. They should be able to smell and hear each other, but not see each other. If either cat growls or hisses, try moving their food dishes further away from the door until they will focus on their food. Repeat this for two or three days, gradually moving the dishes closer to the door each time. Both cats should be comfortable with this routine before moving on to the next step.

STEP 2: SCENT SWAPPING

You will now want to begin scent swapping; give one cat's bed or favorite blanket to the other, and vice versa. If they do not respond negatively, and your new cat seems comfortable exploring their room, you are now going to want to temporarily switch the locations of each cat so they can explore the other's territory and investigate their scent more. You can do this by placing one cat in a carrier, letting the other cat into the now vacated space and shutting the door, and letting the second cat out of the carrier into the space that is new to them. You can do this every day or every other day, for as short as 20 minutes or up to a few hours, depending on how comfortable each cat seems. Once they both seem completely comfortable in the other's space- which could take a few days or a few weeks- you can move on to the next step.

STEP 3: VISUAL ACCESS

This is when you start to allow the cats visual access to one another at meal times. You'll want to set this up just like you did in step one, where you feed them on opposite sides of the door, however instead of a completely shut door you will want to install a tall pet gate (or two, one secured on top of the other) in the doorway. You can drape a towel or a sheet over this so the cats will only be able to see each other through a small section. Feed them as close together as they are comfortable with. Repeat this process at each meal time, adjusting the distance from the door you feed your cats and the amount of the gate you cover with the sheet as needed. If either cat is hissing or will not focus on their food, increase the distance and increase the coverage. Once both cats are comfortable eating relatively close to the door with the gates completely uncovered, move on to the next step.



TIPS 4 SUCCESS

CAT/CAT HOUSEHOLDS

- Don't worry about what gender each cat is- as long as everyone involved is spayed or neutered, gender does not play a huge role in getting along, and personality is much more important
- Add a lot of vertical space to your home, such as cat trees, sturdy shelves installed on your wall, or cat hammocks secured to windows.
- Don't expect this to be a fast process. While some cats may learn to get along in a matter of days, in most cases it takes weeks or longer.
- Make sure you have enough litter boxes, and that they are distributed throughout the house. A good rule to follow is one more box than the number of cats you have.
- If you have more than one resident cat, go through these steps individually with each animal.
- If you are a visual learner, we recommend watching "Jackson Galaxy" cat introduction videos, available on YouTube.



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STEP 4: IN THE SAME ROOM

It's time to have both cats in a room together! This step is best accomplished with two people. Have one person in a room with a cat, engaging them with something they love. It could be treats, it could be playing, it could be petting- whatever is most desired by that cat. Now, open the door and have the second person lead the other cat into the room, and engage them in whatever it is they love most (food, pets, playing). If they immediately focus on one another and begin to hiss or growl, end the session immediately and go back to the previous step. If they will play or eat happily for ten seconds and then begin to focus on one another, end the session there and repeat later. You always want to try and end the session before the cats show any negative vocalizations or body language; it may be ten seconds the first time, and by the fourth time it's grown to ten minutes. Every cat will progress at a different rate. Once you have had a few days of sessions that end without incident, you can move on to the final step.

STEP 5: OBSERVE AND CO-EXIST

For at least a week or so, you will want to keep your cats separated when no one is at home to observe them. Mostly what you are looking for at this stage is tolerance- both cats can walk around your home or be in the same room together without starting a fight. You will want to continue to create positive associations through play, treats, and mealtimes whenever you can. If the cats are unable to spend time near each other without fighting, go back to the previous step. While some cats may form friendships quickly, the majority of cats will take months to form a closer bond, and while some may never become best friends, being able to peacefully co-exist gives them a great chance at becoming buddies.



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