

Bringing Your New Cat Home

Congratulations You are the proud owner of a cat. No doubt you're looking forward to years of happy companionship. But what do you do now? The first thing you should know about your new pet is that most cats dislike travelling. For the trip home and all future travels, confine your pet in a cat carrier and do not open it during the trip.

The First Day: Your new cat has just spent some time living in a small area awaiting adoption. She may not be used to large, open spaces and may become scared or overwhelmed if released into your entire home. Therefore, it is best to keep her confined to one room or a small area to start with. When you arrive home with your new cat, go into the designated room, close the door, and set the carrier down. Open the carrier door, and then remain nearby quietly to see if she will emerge. Don't force her to come out, let her come out on her own. Some cats may not come out until nighttime. It's not uncommon for cats to want to stay in the carrier, however make sure she has access to food, water and a litter box.

The Following Days: As a rule, cats are upset by changes in their environment. Some cats adjust more quickly, while others may take weeks or months. You must have the patience and understanding to allow your cat to adjust at her own pace. When you first bring her home, your cat is likely to hide - this is why you need to provide a safe, comfortable place for her to retreat to.

Spend as much time in the room with her as you can, when your cat seems happy to see you and is confident and friendly in her limited environment, it is time to introduce her to the next area if she is the only pet. (See cat to cat and cat to dog introductions if there is another pet in the home.). Signs that she may be ready include scratching or meowing at the door and trying to run out when you open the door.

Even if your cat has decided she wants to explore, she may still be easily frightened by sudden noises or too much open space. Keep your cat's original space set up exactly as it has been, so she has a refuge that is familiar to her. This feeling of familiarity is very important to cats. Cat behaviorists indicate that it takes two months for most cats to become totally at home in their new environment.

Cat to Cat Introductions

Introducing a new cat to your household can be very stressful for both the new cat and your resident cat. The time spent in the introduction process is well worth the effort to create a harmonious relationship for years to come. The behavior of your resident cat may change toward you during this time and the loving behavior of your new cat may not be immediately apparent. Until both cats are ready for a face to face introduction, they should NOT SEE each other. Once your new cat is comfortable with you and her surroundings, you can start the introduction process. Be sure to keep them in separate areas behind closed doors while following the procedures below.

Site Swapping: When introducing cats, it's important to let both own the territory (the home). To start, place the resident cat in the safe room and allow the new cat to roam freely. Remember to do this without letting them see each other. Swap their location every 24 hours once your new cat is somewhat comfortable in her safe room.

Create a lovefest: One effective way to get your cats accustomed to each other before they meet for the first time is to place a soft sock on your hand like a glove and gently rub your new cat focusing on the areas close to the whiskers and, the top of the head. These areas release pheromones (happy hormones). Make this time with your new cat a **lovefest** using the sock to caress her face and the top of her head. The next step is to take the same sock and repeat the process on your resident cat(s). Repeat this process multiple times each day so the two scents begin to meld.

Interactive Play Therapy: In nature cats hunt (play), eat and sleep. Interactive play is a very powerful tool that helps your cats become friends and helps your new cat bond with you. Playing next to the closed doors lets the cats know there is a safe and friendly cat on the other side.

Feeding Times: Putting their feeding bowls on both sides of the door furthers the introduction process.

Initially set bowls of their favorite food far enough away from the door to ensure that both cats are comfortable eating. Gradually move the bowls closer to the door until they are a few inches apart.

During this time monitor the cats' behavior when they approach the door that separates them, however, do not interfere with this process. Cats may hiss, growl, flatten their ears as well as twitching their tails. If you see any of these warning signs, be patient and continue the lovefest. It usually takes no longer than two weeks for the cats to adjust to each other's presence through the door.

Cat to Cat Introductions *continued*

Meeting Time: When the cats are showing positive behaviors such as playing footsies under the door, it may be time for them to meet.

Open the door and let them meet for the first time watching them closely at first. You can expect some hissing, however, if you haven't rushed the process, because you either felt sorry for the isolated newcomer, or you didn't have time to follow through all the steps, your cats should be able to get along.

Continue to confine the newcomer to her original room at night and when you are absent to help her feel more secure

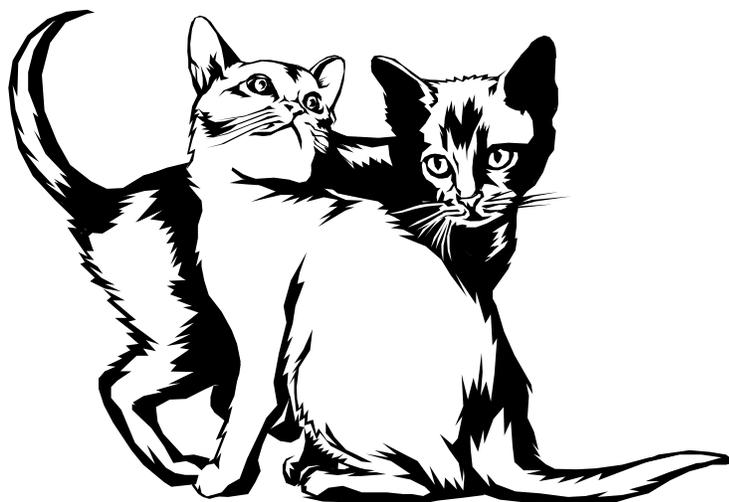
Cat to Dog Introductions

While dogs and cats have often been portrayed as enemies, it is usually a great deal easier to introduce a new cat to a dog than to another cat. While both animals may be wary of each other initially, they do not see the other as direct competition and can actually get on very well.

If your dog is rather excitable, take it for a walk first (to get rid of some of its energy). Keep your dog on the lead and made to sit quietly. The new cat should be given a safe position in the room and allowed to get used to the dog and approach it if she wants. This requires patience and rewards for the dog if it behaves well.

Repeat the introduction process until both animals show no signs of aggression and behave comfortably in each other's presence. **Never** leave the dog and cat together unattended until you are happy they are safe together.

The cat's food will be hugely tempting for any dog, so sit it up and out of the way of thieving canine jaws! Likewise a litter tray can be pretty tempting and should be kept out of reach of the dog if it is likely to snaffle the contents.



Thank you for bringing a cat or kitten home to love.