



# Introducing a New Cat to Your Current Cat



The majority of cats can learn to get along with other cats, but the introduction period must be handled carefully to increase the chances of success. Introducing your new cat to your existing cat(s) can be handled in phases, as described below. Depending

on the cats, it can take from a week to a month or longer to successfully work through all the phases. Give them time, and don't move on to the next phase until you believe that they are completely comfortable.

It is very important to have a prepared room that the new cat can have all to himself, separate from any existing pets. Enter and exit the room carefully as your existing pets will quite likely be waiting outside the door to see what is going on. It's too early for introductions yet, so make your escape calmly but quickly. Now it's time to reassure your old cat(s) with some attention. Throughout all phases, make sure both cats get to spend plenty of time with you or a family member.

## 1. Create a positive association

This phase involves feeding each cat something that they enjoy, such as treats or soft food, next to the closed door, so that the new cat and existing cat are doing something they love (eating) while smelling and sensing each other.

## 2. Swap scents

This phase has two parts. (1) Provide your old cat(s) with a blanket that the new cat has been lying on, and allow them to sniff and investigate it. Similarly, place something in the new cat's room that would smell like your old pets. Give them all time to adjust to the smells. If their reactions are not aggressive (e.g. excessive hissing or growling), move on to step 2. Otherwise, move back a step and give them more time. (2) Confine the old cat(s) to a single room in the house. Let the new cat out of their room and allow them to investigate the house and its smells. Without the cats coming into contact with each other or seeing each other, place the old cat(s) in the new cat's room and let them explore. After a short time, put everyone back where they belong.

## 3. Safe introductions

For this phase, use two door wedges (one on either side of the door) to hold the door open between the cats just enough that they can see each other and stick their paws through to touch each other, but not enough for any heads or bodies to get through.

Alternatively, if you own a baby gate that can easily be pressure-mounted in the doorway, place the baby gate between the cats, but be careful no one feels brave enough to jump over! Give them some time to get used to the sight and touch of each other, praise their good behaviour, and then close the door again.

## 4. Get a little closer

Be patient, we're almost there! In this phase, allow your cats to actually have contact with each other. If you live in a big house, it would be wise to close doors to some rooms to limit their roaming space because you need to stick with them wherever they go. Have a towel in your hand, just in case someone decides to get aggressive. A little hissing, spitting or light tapping is fine, but when a brawl breaks out, you need to take control. Scoop up your old cat if you are comfortable that they won't turn on you, but otherwise lightly throw the towel over the aggressive cat, make your way in to break up the fight, and separate the cats once again. In this case, the cats need more time and you need to go back a step. On the other hand, if they are able to calmly exist in the same room for a while (20 minutes, perhaps), praise them all and then separate them again. Continue with these introductions throughout the next few days, for increasing lengths of time. Use positive reinforcement such as play time and treats while they are together to convince them that their co-existence is to the benefit of all.

## 5. The final integration

Eventually, you will feel comfortable enough to allow the cats to be together when you are in the house, without the need for your undivided attention. However, when you are not around for a quick rescue, such as when you leave the house or when you are sleeping, continue to separate them. In time, you will become confident in their new found relationship, whether it be new best friends, or simply indifference, and you will be able to leave them together at all times. To prevent potential litter box issues, continue to provide a litter box in the new cat's initial room. If you want to move it elsewhere, do this inches at a time until it reaches its final destination. It is recommended that there is one litter box per cat in your home, and that they are cleaned daily.

## 6. Happily ever after

Great job, you're done. Thank you for offering your home to a new cat, and for taking the time to start things off right. Now all you need to do is provide all of your pets with a lifetime of love and happiness!