

CAT INTRO 101

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Research has shown that a single hostile encounter between two unfamiliar cats can set the tone for their relationship for a long time to come.



So to prevent your new cat from getting off on the wrong foot with your resident cat, plan to introduce them gradually. Generally speaking, it is easier to introduce a kitten to an adult than to introduce two adults. Adults that grew up around other cats usually adjust more easily to a new feline housemate. When you are adopting a new cat, try to match the personality of your new cat to that of your resident cat. Remember to spend plenty of quality time alone with your resident cat in order to minimize jealousy. At first, do not allow face-to-face contact between the two cats. You will confine the new cat to a separate room for a minimum of two weeks during which time you will swap their scents that are on towels or blankets, have controlled meetings and eventually you can let your new cat have full access to the rest of the house. By following these steps you will have a seamless integration of your new cat into an existing pet household.

Equipment and Supplies:

Food
Water
Bowls

Litter Box (I recommend a large hooded box with a charcoal filter to keep down dust and smell)



Litter (I recommend clumping litter unless you have adopted a small kitten, then I recommend Yesterday's News)

Television or radio

Toys

Cat Bed (however, a cat usually sleeps anywhere but on the bed you have purchased for them)

Scratching Post

Warning: Do not let the net cat out of the room or your resident cat into the room before proper introductions are made.

Confinement:

Many people believe they can shorten this step and simply let the new cat have full run of the house after a day or two. However, cats are not pack animals and are very territorial and if they do not have a good start, they are likely to never get along. Therefore, the confinement period is the most important part of introducing a new cat to an existing animal household. They can smell each other under the door and the resident cat(s) can become used to the fact that there is a new member of the household.

1. Find a room the cat can use as its "home-base" for the next several weeks. Spend time with the new cat so they will become accustomed to you, your sounds, smells and habits. When you are not there, leave either the television or the radio on for comfort.
2. Place the litter box in one corner of the room and fill the box with about 2 inches of clumping litter. Again do not use clumping litter if the cat is under five months old. Kittens like to eat clay litter and it can clump in their stomach and it can be fatal.
3. In another corner of the room, away from the litter box, place the food and water. You may wish to place a plastic carpet runner beneath both the feeding area and the litter box for purposes of cleaning.
4. Place the cat in the room with you, with the door closed. **ALLOW THE CAT TO DISCOVER WHERE EVERYTHING IS. DO NOT** take the cat to the various locations. **DO NOT** place the cat in the litter box.

5. Be passive. Allow the cat to discover the room's strong points, like window ledges to look out of, a comfortable couch or bed, tables to jump up on, and anything else in the room that might be used as an “escape route,” should one be needed (from the cat’s point of view).

Warning: If you have carpet, put down a barrier under the door to prevent the carpet from being torn up by curious cats.

Swap Scents:

This is a very important step because cats rely on their sense of smell to determine if someone is friend for foe:

1. Switch blankets, towels or beds between your resident cat(s) and your new cat. By doing this, you are giving them a chance to become accustomed to each other’s scents.
2. Rub a towel on one animal and put it underneath the food dish of the other animal.
3. Switch scratching posts because a cat has scent glands in their feet and is not only stretching and exercising when they scratch, but also leaving their scent.
4. Put the new cat into the resident cat(s) living area and put the resident cat(s) into the new cat’s room. Basically, switch living areas for one day at a time.

Controlled Meeting

Controlling the access between the cats when they are first meeting is critical to a successful introduction:

1. After a few days, crack open the door separating the two cats. Prop it open a couple inches so they can see one another but cannot make full contact. Once they tolerate this limited contact, open the door a bit wider for short periods of time.
2. Feed both the new cat and the resident cat(s) with the door opened just enough for them to see each other. Put down smelly, savory canned food for the cats. This will reinforce that seeing the other cat means treats and cats are very motivated by food.
3. After several feedings, open the door and allow the new cat to come out of the room in its own time. **DO NOT FORCE THE CAT OUT OF THE ROOM.** Allow the new cat to explore on its own for a short period of time (usually 30 minutes to an hour) and then put it back into its room and close the door.

4. Repeat this step several times and each time increase the time the new cat is left out of the room. Always leave the door to the room open when you are allowing it to explore so it can go back to a place of safety and security if it needs to.

Letting Your Cat Have Complete Access to the House

Now that the cats have smelled each other, eaten in each other's presence and seen each other, it is time to allow them full access to one another:

1. Now that you, your new cat and your resident cat(s) are more comfortable with each other, let the new cat out of the room for longer periods of time. Again, it is important to leave the door to room open so the new cat can get back in as this room gives the new cat a sense of security and safety.
2. When the cats seem comfortable with longer periods of exposure, feed them on opposite sides of the same room. Then return them to their separate quarters.
3. Keep them separated when you are not home to supervise until you are certain they can tolerate each other's presence. It may take two or three months before they reach this stage.
4. Once you are confident that they can live in peaceful harmony with one another, you can leave the door open and allow them both access to each other all the time

Warning: If spats occur between the cats, use water or a loud noise to startle and separate them. Never use corporate punishment on a cat for bad behavior as this simply makes the cat fear you and does not change the behavior.

Now that everyone is one big happy family, you can relax and enjoy the healing properties of having multiple cats. Our cats make us happy. They calm us when we are stressed, make us feel loved, and entertain us with their antics (except at 2 a.m.). But did you know that their special powers may also extend to improving our health? It's true. Here is what the research says about how our pets -- including cats -- help watch over our well-being:

- **TLC for your ticker:** People with pets have a lower risk of developing cardiovascular disease than do people without pets, suggests one study. In fact, related research tells us pets can increase 1-year survival rates in people recovering from a heart attack and can lower blood pressure and cholesterol levels.
- **Cancer recovery made easier:** In a study of women recuperating from breast cancer surgery, most who owned pets reported feeling a greater sense of support and control over their illness and treatment.
- **Mind and mood boost.** In older populations, research suggests that pets may help chase away loneliness and reduce symptoms of dementia. And in a study of men living with

AIDS, research revealed that those who owned cats reported fewer symptoms of depression than the men without a pet.

- **Overall health protection:** People in a study who owned either a cat or a dog suffered significantly fewer minor health problems compared with people who were not owners. Similar research found that having pets also meant fewer trips to the doctor.

