

INTRODUCING A NEW CAT TO YOUR OTHER PETS

SUCCESSFUL INTRODUCTIONS REQUIRE TIME AND PATIENCE. DO NOT EXPECT THINGS TO BE PERFECT OVERNIGHT!

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Introducing a New Cat to Other Cats

1. Confine the new cat to one medium sized room with its litterbox, food, water, and a bed. Feed the resident cats and the newcomer near either side of the door to this room. Do not put the food so close to the door that seeing each other eat upsets them. This will help to start things out on the right foot by associating something enjoyable (eating!) with each other's presence. Gradually move the dishes closer to the door until the cats can eat calmly directly on either side. Next, use two doorstops to prop open the door just enough to allow the cats to see each other, and repeat the whole process.
2. Switch sleeping blankets between the new cat and resident cats so they have a chance to become accustomed to each other's scent. Also, put the scented blankets underneath the food dishes.
3. Once the new cat is using its litter box and eating regularly while confined, let it have free time in the house while confining the other cats. This switch provides another way for the cats to have experience with each other's scent without a face-to-face meeting, and allows the newcomer to become familiar with its new surroundings without being frightened by other animals.
4. Avoid any interactions between the cats, which result in either fearful or aggressive behavior. If you allow these responses to become a habit, they can be difficult to change. It is better to introduce the animals to each other so gradually that neither cat becomes afraid or aggressive. You can expect mild forms of these behaviors, but do not give them the opportunity to intensify. If either cat becomes fearful or aggressive, separate them, and continue the introduction process in a series of gradual steps, as outlined above.

Precautions: You will need to add another litterbox, and probably clean all the boxes more frequently. Make sure that none of the cats is being "ambushed" by another while trying to use the box.

Try to keep the resident cat's schedule as close as possible to what it was before the newcomer's appearance.

Cats can make lots of noise, pull each other's hair, and roll around quite dramatically without injury. If small spats do occur between the cats, you should not attempt to intervene directly to separate the cats. Instead, make a very loud noise, or throw a pillow at or a glass of water on the cats in order to separate them. Give them both a chance to calm down a before re-introducing them to each other. Be sure each cat has a safe hiding place.

Introducing a New Cat to a Resident Dog

Dogs and cats who did not have experience with the opposite species when they were young will require some extra time to become accustomed to each other. Dogs usually want to chase and play with cats, and cats are usually afraid and defensive.

1. If your dog does not already know the commands “sit”, “down”, “come”, and “stay” you should begin working on them. Little tidbits of food increase your dog’s motivation to perform, which will be necessary in the presence of such a strong distraction as a new cat! Even if your dog already knows the commands, work with obeying commands in return for a tidbit.
2. After the animals have become comfortable eating on either side of the door, and have been exposed to each other’s scents as described earlier, you can attempt a face to face introduction in a controlled manner. Put your dog’s leash on, and command him to either “sit” or “down” and “stay”, using food tidbits. Have another family member enter the room and quietly sit down with the cat on his/her lap. Also, offer the cat some special tidbits. At first, the cat and dog should be on **OPPOSITE** sides of the room. Repeat this step several times until both the cat and dog are tolerating each other without fear, aggression, or other uncontrollable behavior.
3. Next, move the animals a little closer together, with the dog still on the leash and the cat gently held in a lap. If the cat does not like to be held, you can use a wire crate or carrier instead. If the dog gets up from its “stay” position, it should be firmly repositioned, and praised and rewarded for obeying the “stay” command. If the cat becomes frightened, increase the distance between the animals and progress more slowly. Eventually, the animals should be brought close enough together to allow them to investigate each other.
4. Although your dog must be taught that chasing or being rough with the cat is unacceptable behavior, your dog must also be taught how to behave appropriately, and be rewarded for doing so (e.g. sitting, coming when called, or lying down in return for a tidbit.) If you punish your dog every time the cat is around, and s/he never has “good things” happen in the cat’s presence, your dog may redirect aggression toward the cat.
5. You may want to keep your dog on leash and with you when the cat is free in the house during the introduction process. Be sure that your cat has an escape route, and a place to hide. Keep the dog and cat separated when you are not home until you are certain the cat will be safe.

Precautions: Dogs like to eat cat food because it is very high in protein, and therefore very tasty. You should keep the cat food out of the dog’s reach (in a closet, on a high shelf, etc.) Why dogs like to “raid the litterbox” is not well understood, but eating cat feces is a relatively common behavior. Although there are no health hazards to the dog from this habit, it is usually distasteful to owners. Unfortunately, attempts to keep the dog out of the litterbox by “booby trapping” it will also keep the cat away as well. Punishment after the fact will **NOT** change the dog’s behavior. Probably the best solution is to place the litterbox where the dog cannot access it - such as behind a baby gate, or in a closet with the door anchored open (from both sides) just wide enough for the cat.