

Cat to Cat Introductions

Cats are territorial, some more than others, and in most cases do not initially take well to “intruders” in their territory, not even to small kittens. By doing a slow integration procedure, with gradual amounts of exposure over a whole lot of days or even weeks, building up to full-time mingling, things will usually work out fine.

Take each step slowly, holding onto one step for as many days as it takes for the cats to be okay at that step before moving on to the next step. (A few hisses are ok, but not prolonged hissing, growling or yowling, nor fights.) Rushing things will not make the cats accept each other faster, but will likely wind up making them not get along. If you thought it would be fine to move on to the next step, but the cats turned out not to be ready, simply back track to the previous step for a few more days.

Isolation

Isolate the new cat completely for a few days, and especially until the new cat has been examined by a vet to be checked for any illnesses, diseases and parasites. The new cat also needs time to calm down and get used to being in a strange place, as well as getting used to the new people, before he or she is in a good frame of mind to meet other cats.

Scent Familiarization

Scent familiarization with items, such as towels rubbed on each cat, then left in the area of the other cat, while the cats are being kept separately. Petting one cat and then letting the other cat smell the scent on your hand is also helpful.

Visual Familiarization

Seeing each other with no physical contact, such as from a slightly cracked opened door, or in a large carrier, a few times a day for a short time period (stopping if there is prolonged hissing, growling or other aggressive behaviours). This is done along with Scent Familiarization.

Room Swapping

Switching the cats’ places for a while every day, with no physical contact between them. This is addition to doing Scent Familiarization and Visual Familiarization. Room swapping lets the new cat get used to other areas of the home without worry about the other cat, but it also winds up resulting in better scent familiarization, as each cat will smell the scent of the other cat more throughout the rooms, and in a natural way (as opposed to the towel left lying around as done at first).

Developing Positive Associations

Start developing positive associations with no physical contact, such as by feeding the cats tastily canned food or treats on opposite sides of a door when cracked opened and even when it is shut. Continue with the above steps as well.

Short Supervised Visits

Brief, highly supervised visits paired with food or treats to allow the cats to pair something positive with the other cat while the other cat is in view in the same area. Do not place the cats next to one another, but rather merely in the same room a fair distance apart so they can freely, or not, approach one another. Do not allow any fights or one cat to chase the other. Calmly separate the cats when things start to go badly. These short visits need to be kept positive in order for positive feelings to have a chance to develop between the cats. Continue with Room Swapping, but Scent Familiarization and Visual Familiarization can be discontinued.

Separation Signs of Hostilities

Separate the cats at signs of hostilities, or great fear. Learn cat body language to tell when a problem is starting.

Longer, Carefully Supervised Visits

Mingling under very careful supervision for up to a few hours, before total separation again. Adjust the length of time depending upon whether there are any signs of hostilities or stress, but no matter how well things seem, do not yet permit 24/7 free mingling. Continue with Room Swapping.

Limited Free Mingling

When the above have gone well, free mingling except when the people are not home or asleep, so quick intervention can be done if needed.

Free Mingling Full Time

The cats are left together freely all the time when all the above steps have gone well. Backtrack to the limited mingling if the cats weren't quite ready to be together all the time.

Stay on each step for as many days, weeks, or even months, as necessary for your particular combination of cats. Some cats take longer to adjust to a new cat than some other cats will.

You may come across advice saying to ignore the new cat in the presence of the resident cat so that the resident cat doesn't get upset. Do not do that. If you ignore a new cat in front of the resident cat, it can make the resident cat feel you don't really care for or want the new cat there. It also makes the new cat feel unwanted and uncared for. It is good to show some attention to the new cat in the presence of the resident cat, but don't go overboard. When you take in a new cat, you need to feel as much loyalty and concern for that cat, and worry just as much about how the new cat feels as you do your first cat.