

## Successful Cat to Cat Introductions

### How do I introduce a new cat into the household?

Unlike dogs, cats are not pack animals. They are used to living by themselves, so introducing cats to each other will require patience on your part, allow 2-4 weeks, or even more for this process. Cats need to be calm and relaxed with each step before you move on. Take as much time as your cats need before you move on to the next one. Time is your friend in this situation. Moving too fast may result in a negative interaction that can put you back at the beginning and can dramatically lengthen the time it will take to successfully integrate the cats.

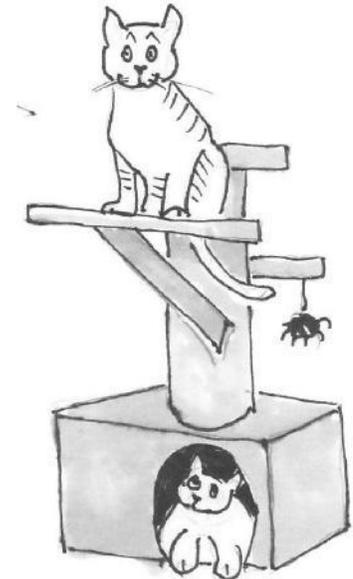
Make sure you have plenty of resources for both cats. This includes lots of food bowls, water bowls, litter boxes, scratching posts, and high vertical places to sleep and toys. You want all of the cats to feel that there is plenty for everyone without having to compete with each other.

**A Room of Her Own.** Put your new cat in a room of her own, one where you can close the door. Cats feel safe and secure when they have mastered their environment. The smaller the environment, the sooner your cat will master it and feel comfortable. Ensure that both your resident cat(s) and new cat are getting plenty of attention and playtime. The new cat should stay in this room exclusively until she is using her litter box, eating, and comes to you when you open the door. The longer the two cats are isolated, the greater likelihood you will have success with the next steps. Once the new cat is calm and relaxed in her new space (this typically takes several days to a week), you can begin to alternate the areas in which they are confined so that they get used to being in all areas of the home without the other cat(s) present.

**Sense and Scents-ability:** Your cat has 900 times the number of sense receptors than you do! So, you can be sure that both cats will be smelling each other through the crack under the door. When the new cat is accustomed to her new room, increase their scent introduction by switching their bedding or by giving each cat a toy or even a sock that has the other's scent. You can rub a sock on each cat to gather the scent. Always pair the giving of the scented article of the other cat with treats or something yummy. That way, both cats will learn that good things happen when they are exposed to each other's scent. If you are introducing multiple cats start with the one who most likely to be receptive to a newcomer.

**A Crack in the Door.** Once you sense that both cats have settled into their new living arrangements and are comfortable with each other's scent, you can begin their physical introduction. **GO SLOWLY TO AVOID DISASTER!**

First, make sure that you have a way to secure your new cat's door while it is cracked open. A good way to do this is with two rubber door stoppers placed on either side of the door. Make sure that you open the door only a crack. Your goal here is to have the cats get a peek at each other. Watch for any hissing, growling, flattened ears, or any other unhappy behavior. Close the door immediately if this happens and go back to scented articles and treats. Remember, this may take time, so be patient.



Be sure to feed your cats on either side of the door. This will help them to feel secure and know there are plenty of resources for both of them. Give them some wet food when they are together to reinforce that good things happen when they are together.

Gradually, open the door a bit wider and watch carefully to see what happens. Once they can see and smell each other without hissing or growling, you can move on to the next step.

**Play!** When the cracked door is going well, you can begin to play with both cats at the same time. You might want to place a baby gate or other barrier at the door. The best type of toy for this is an interactive rod toy like the Cat Catcher. You don't want the cats to use the same toy, so have one toy in each hand or ask someone else to assist you. First, play with them while you stand next to the gate so the cats are near each other but still separated.

Keep the play sessions short. Always stop the play on a good note (before there are any negative interactions) and reward the cats with a treat. If things are going well, gradually increase the amount of time you play with them. After some time, if the cats enjoy the play and do not react negatively to each other, you can begin to play with the cats, still using two toys, without the gate in the way or with the door wide open.

**Supervised Time Together.** Now it's time for the cats to spend some time together. Your cats have gotten used to each other's scent, associate good things happening when they are together, have seen each other through the partially opened door, and can relax enough to play in each other's presence.

At this point, you can give them supervised time together without a barrier. During this time, you must be vigilant; at the slightest indication of potential bullying (stalking or hard-staring), you should distract and redirect the cats by showing them the toy or some other toy or treats that you know will effectively distract them.

This is crucial; you must be prepared to distract and redirect any potential aggression. Continue to play with the cats and end their time together on a good note by giving treats.

Gradually extend the amount of time that you allow the cats to be in the same area under close supervision. It will likely take some time to get to the point where the cats can be unsupervised, but it's well worth going slow with the introduction.

#### **Behavior Resources:**

Marin Humane's [Behavior & Training](#) department conducts various cat workshops. Sign up on our [Cat Behavior](#) (MarinHumane.org/oh-behave/cats) page for the next available class series. We also have **Cat Behavior Consultants** who are available for private training or consultations (on-site or in-home) at 415.506.6284 or [CatBehavior@MarinHumane.org](mailto:CatBehavior@MarinHumane.org).

More information about cat behavior is available by clicking [here](#) or on our website at [MarinHumane.org/oh-behave/handouts](http://MarinHumane.org/oh-behave/handouts).