



Cat to Cat Introductions

PREPARATION

Switch current cat to scheduled feeding. Do not free feed. Food will become a motivator during the introduction process. (See below)

Decide where you're going to set up base camp for the new cat. This could be the master or a spare bedroom, an office, or even the bathroom when there is no other option. You want a room you will be in often. A laundry room is not a good choice. Add a litter box, toys, scratching post and bedding. Incorporate some blankets or bedding the new cat can imprint its scent on. (You will use this later to help your cat adjust to the newcomer.)

BRINGING CAT HOME

Put your cat in a separate room so it does not see you bringing the new cat into the home. You want to introduce by scent before sight. This is really important and should not be rushed. You might think you can ignore this aspect of the process because of the personality of one or both cats, and how well you feel you matched them. However, scent before sight is essential for a smooth introduction.

SCENT INTRODUCTIONS

Take a soft item, blanket or bedding from your cat and share it with the new comer. Don't force it on the kitty, just let it explore at its own pace. Do the same with your kitty with the bedding of the newcomer.

SITE AND SCENT SWAPPING

Once the newcomer is completely comfortable and trusting of you and is at home in its room – lounging on bed, sits in window sill watching birds, meows at the door to get out – it's time to swap areas.

- Carry newcomer out of its room, put in bathroom and shut the door.
- Allow the resident cat to walk into the newcomer's room and shut the door.
- Allow the newcomer to explore the rest of the home.

Let them have quality time in their "new spaces." Start for short periods of time, maybe 30 minutes and extend to an hour. Make sure your cat doesn't get stressed in the newcomer's room. Don't rush this process. Swap spaces daily until everyone is relaxed – maybe days, maybe weeks. Even though you are tempted, don't let cats see each other.

FEEDING ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE DOOR

This is to create a positive association between your cat and the newcomer. Mealtime will consist of bowls set up on either side of a closed door. These bowls should start out far enough apart so the cats will walk up, eat, and walk away without incident, but close enough that they sense there's another cat on the other side of the door. From there, gradually move the bowls closer. If you move the bowls closer and your cat refuses to eat, move the bowl back to his comfort level and start the process again.

VISUAL ACCESS

Place a baby gate in the doorway of the Newcomer's room. Feed them on opposite sides of the gate. If the cats react to each other, place a blanket over the gate and slowly raise it more at each feeding. If one or the other cat walk away from the gate, let them. Just keep up feeding them on the opposite side until they are comfortable. Never leave them unsupervised with the gate up! The cats can easily jump over and rush the introduction. This normally never ends well.

INTRODUCTIONS

- Before bringing the cats into the same room, prepare by gathering a blanket and a separator like a flattened cardboard box plus some toys and treats.
- Pick a room both cats are familiar with – living room or kitchen. The idea is to bring the cats in with their focus on the toys not each other (wand toys like the Da Bee are great for this).
- Have two people, one for each cat. Don't use your hands!!! You can also throw a blanket on one and wrap it up and carry it to another room. Hopefully you won't have to do that.
- Set the cats down and immediately interest them in separate toys. They should be interested in the toys and treats. Be prepared to use the cardboard to separate them if needed.
- Keep these sessions short in the beginning and always end on a good note, returning the newcomer to his room. Don't push this. The cats will gradually get more comfortable and begin interacting in positive ways so you can stretch the time out.
- Never leave the cats together unsupervised! When you leave the house, keep them in separate rooms even if the cats are getting along. Don't leave them together unsupervised until you are absolutely certain they have made a solid adjustment to each other.

If you have any trouble or have questions, you can contact our cat behavior volunteer at GoodKitty@HumaneTomorrow.org.