

INTRODUCING CATS

Introducing your cat to your new cat or kitten

3/3/3 RULE



3 DAYS TO DECOMPRESS

- Feeling overwhelmed
- Scared or unsure of what's going on
- Not yet comfortable to be "himself"
- May not want to eat or drink
- Shuts down and/or hides under furniture
- Tests the boundaries



3 WEEKS TO LEARN YOUR ROUTINE

- Starts settling in
- Feels more comfortable
- Realizes this could be forever home
- Figures out the environment, gets into a routine
- Lets their guard down; begins to show true personality
- Behavior issues may appear



3 MONTHS TO FEEL AT HOME

- Finally feels completely comfortable in their home
- Begins to build trust and a true bond
- Gains a sense of security with their new family
- Settles into a routine

SEPARATE ROOMS, BOWLS, LITTER BOX AND TOYS

Confine your new cat to a room such as a spare bedroom or bathroom that your resident cat doesn't use. Provide them with:

- Food, water and a litter box
- Areas with comfortable bedding and hiding places
- Toys, scratching post

These items should be new, if possible. Avoid using your resident cat's belongings.

TIME TO SETTLE

Give your new cat plenty of time to get used to its new surroundings (two days, or up to two weeks). Signs that your new cat is now comfortable are:

- Being friendly when you enter the room - rubbing at your legs, purring and meowing
- Resting on its side with belly exposed or rolling over
- Playing with its toys
- Rubbing its face on furniture, corners of walls and other items in its room
- Normal eating, drinking, grooming and litter box use

If your new cat shows signs of frustration, provide more space (such as a hallway or additional room that your resident cat does not use). If more space is not possible, start the introduction process earlier (without physically meeting). Signs of frustration are:

- Scratching or pawing at the door and surrounding area, or at the windows
- Meowing for several minutes at a time
- Pacing by the door
- Rearing up at the door
- Swiping at you when you try to leave the room



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Step 1: Exchange bedding

Take one piece of each cat's bedding (such as a blanket or towel) and place it in the other cat's beds. When the cats are used to the new bedding, swap it back (to mingle their scents). Repeat as needed.

Step 2: Explore each other's rooms

Separately, allow the cats to explore each other's areas of the home. Temporarily remove the new cat from its room (and confine elsewhere) to allow the resident cat to explore the room, and vice versa.

Step 3: Allow visual contact

The cats should only be allowed to see one another once they are fully relaxed in the home in general and when encountering the scent of the other cat. Being able to see each other should happen through a physical barrier, such as:

- a door held slightly ajar (so they can't pass through)
- a screen door or baby gate

Using crates - for kitten introductions only

- If a kitten is used to a crate, it can be set in a corner of a room and partially covered with a blanket to provide an area for the kitten to be out of sight.
- It should be big enough for the kitten to move around in and have food, water, a litter tray and a hiding place, such as a cardboard box or igloo bed. This allows the kitten to hide if they feel anxious.
- Open the door to the room and let the resident cat explore the room with the kitten in the crate. Distract the kitten with treats or toys, and give the cat treats for positive associations.
- Let them sniff through the crate, but at any sign of growling, hissing, or flattening ears, instantly distract and lure the instigator out of sight of the other cat using a fishing rod toy. Never punish.
- Keep sessions short, and stop while things are going well. Separate if either cat shows distress.
- If there is more than one resident cat, visual contact should start with one resident cat each time, and then add more progressively.

Step 4: Supervised contact

- Stage 4 should only start only when cats are fully comfortable with seeing one another through a barrier. Open the barrier quietly and observe. Never force the cats together. The goal is for them comfortable around each other - they don't need to interact. If any signs of negativity or distress, replace the barrier and go back a stage. If the cats are relaxed, have supervised sessions as often as possible.

Step 5: Unsupervised access for short periods

- Start short (a few minutes), and extend as long as unsupervised sessions are going well. Make sure the cats have access back to their own parts of the house. It's important that each cat has its own food, water, toys and litter box in their own areas, to avoid competition.
- With time, the room can be kept open and the cats can come and go as they please. A separate room or or vertical spaces such as shelves or perches can help cats maintain their own space if needed. The key is to keep an eye on them, since relationships between cats can change over time.

Adapted from the icatcare.org article, "Introducing An Adult Cat to Your Cat",
<https://icatcare.org/advice/introducing-an-adult-cat-to-your-cat>

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