

Cat/Cat Introductions

Introducing your new cat to your old cat takes a little patience and planning. It may take some cats a little longer than others to adapt to a new housemate, but the following tips will help ease the transition and decrease stress for all of you.

Set up a safe area for your new cat which contains food, litter box, hiding places and toys. Give the new cat a few days to acclimate and realize that he/she is safe in this new place. Make time to play with your new kitty.

- If you have existing cats in the house, wipe a damp cloth over your existing kitties' heads and bodies and leave that cloth in your new cat's area. We want the new cat to get used to the scents of the other cat(s) in the home. Then do the same with your new cat and place the cloth in your existing cat's area.
- After a few days, it's time to give the new cat a tiny bit more access to the other cats in the home by feeding the cats extra tasty wet food or treats on opposite sides of a closed door. After a week of this, you can try replacing the door with an extra tall baby gate or netting. We want the cats to see one another but not allow them to have access to one another just yet. Now you can feed them on opposite sides of the netting or gate for a few days but only a few days. If the cats have visual access to one another but can't physically get to one another, you risk one of the cats spraying/markings at the barrier.

If things are proceeding smoothly you may give the cats physical access to one another. Here are some tips for keeping initial introductions positive:

- Make sure there are plenty of escape routes including cat trees, cat condos and perches for a quick escape. (no confined spaces or closing the cats into an area).
- Keep the interactions short at first (a few minutes the first few times).
- If you see either cat beginning to stiffen or posture, separate the cats and try again the next day. If possible, never let a fight break out.
- Keep the cats' interactions positive, using toys and treats to encourage them to feel safe and rewarded in each other's presence.
- Only leave the cats out together unsupervised when they've been interacting positively for several weeks.
- Keep the environmental enrichment high (lots of interactive toys, kitty DVDs, work-to-eat puzzles, scratching posts, etc.) and, above all, remember that this is a gradual process, and, while they may not necessarily become best buddies, they will at least learn to live together peacefully.

If you have any questions about how your new cat is adapting, please call the Humane Society of Pensacola at 432-4250.