

# Adding Another Cat to Your Household

Thinking of adopting a second cat? Here are some tips that can increase your chances for establishing a peaceful multi-cat home.

## Selecting your second cat

- Don't worry too much about the gender of the cats involved. Age and temperament are the most important factors.
- Adult cats will usually accept a new kitten more easily than they will accept a new adult cat. Cats are territorial, and your cat may resent an adult feline intruder. That does not mean that adult cats won't get along, they will just need
- If you're able to choose from a group of kittens, avoid a kitten that's hissing, growling or engaged in serious battle with his mates.
- Prefer to adopt an adult cat? Success depends largely on the personality of your present cat: if he's easygoing and the new cat is also laid back, you may have little trouble if you introduce them slowly and correctly.

## Introducing your new cat to your resident cat

Cats are solitary and highly territorial creatures that often require weeks or months to adjust to changes in their environment and lifestyle. For that reason, first impressions are extremely important when meeting other household pets. Cats that are introduced too quickly and fight may never learn to coexist peacefully.

- Create a sanctuary room for your new cat. When you bring your new cat home, confine him to one room with his own litterbox, bed, food, and water for a week, or at least until he has been examined by your vet.
- Feed them on opposite sides of the same door. At the next meal, place the two cats' bowls on either side of the door to that room. The aim is for the cats to associate the pleasurable activity of eating with the presence of the other cat. Gradually move the bowls closer with each feeding. When they can eat calmly with both bowls directly across from each other, open the door a crack — for just a few seconds — so they can see each other as they eat.
- Let your new cat explore. Once the new cat seems comfortable in his new surroundings, is eating well, and using his litter box, confine your resident cat in another room and let the new cat explore the house. This allows the new cat to come in contact with the resident cat's scent without direct contact. Another option is to exchange the cats' bedding for a night.
- Monitor the cats' first encounter closely and limit the time they spend together at first. Some display of fearful or aggressive behavior (crouching, hissing, ears back) is to be expected, but you want to avoid letting them establish a pattern of aggressive or fearful behavior, which may be difficult to change. If these behaviors intensify, separate the cats again and go back to step one.
- If they fight, distract and separate. If an actual fight breaks out, throw a towel over them (to distract them) or make a loud noise to separate them. Lure the new cat back to his sanctuary room (don't pick him up while he's still aroused) and give them a few days to calm down. Do not hold either cat in your arms during introductions: if either one reacts aggressively to the other cat, you could be scratched or bitten.
- Continue to provide supervised encounters with both cats, watching closely for signs of tension or aggression. If one cat appears to be freezing, staring, or fixating on the other cat, have some treats or fun toys nearby to direct them away from each other. This will also continue to teach them that good things happen when the other cat is near.

## **Tips and reminders**

Be sensitive to what a big change this is for your resident cat. Give him the security of his usual routine and his own special time with you.

- Keep in mind that “success” doesn’t necessarily mean your cats will be best buddies. Some cats become bonded to one another while others spend the rest of their lives avoiding and hissing at each other. Realize that either of these scenarios might happen. Your goal in facilitating introductions is to set the stage for the cats to peacefully share their living quarters, but understand you simply cannot “make” them like each other.
- This process takes time: count on 2-4 weeks if integrating a kitten and an adult, and 4-6 weeks (or longer) if integrating two adults.
- While following this protocol will maximize your chances of success, know that some cats simply never learn to coexist peacefully. If you have followed the introduction process and do not see any improvement after a month’s time — especially if one cat is terrorizing or injuring the other — long-term success may be unrealistic. Rehoming one of the cats or keeping them permanently separate may be necessary for everyone’s safety.