

You have gotten so much satisfaction out of your resident cat that you've decided it's time to bring another one home. Here are some tips for introducing a second cat to your home and resident cat.

What to Do Before Allowing the Cats to Meet

First off, for any newcomer if not already vetted, you need to have the new cat or kitten over to the vet to be tested for all the standard diseases. If it is a stray or rescue ask the vet to do a fecal, check for fleas and flea-dirt, ear mites, lice, ringworm etc. If the kitten is of the correct age get them started on their first series of shots. You do not want to bring a kitten into the same proximity of the already resident cat until the newcomer has been completely checked out. Putting two cats together right away without a vet check could open up your resident cat to some danger of exposure. It is always best to be sure the kitten or cat has been given the all clear.



Once you return home with your new cat, you need to seclude the newcomer in a small room. The kitty should have two litter-boxes, one to urinate in, and the other to defecate in. Provide the new one with new food bowls, not plastic though (harbors bacteria), glass or metal is best. Put in a few toys so the newcomer has something to amuse herself with, and then just shut the door and leave her be. Check your linen closet for an old blanket you don't care much about and give this to the new cat to lay on. If the newcomer does not show any interest in the blanket, you can rub some catnip on it, or spray some catnip on it to entice her to consider rolling around all over it. The purpose of this blanket is to saturate it with the newcomer's smell. Let her have this blanket for a few days then take the blanket out and without washing it, leave it in the corner for your resident cat to find. When resident cat approaches the blanket, observe closely the body language. Normal language would be sniffing, pawing, and even growling. Warning signs would be flattened ears, twitching tail and hissing, if you see any of these warning signs, you may be in for a bit of a battle when the two first initially meet.

Then, let resident kitty do what he or she wants to the blanket, let him/her have it for a few days. Rub resident kitty all over with the blanket, play interactive games on top of it. Then, still not washing it (yep, probably pretty grungy about now). Turn around and give it back to the newcomer. Let the new one have the blanket for a day or so, and watch the body language looking again for any warning signs. Take the blanket, and if it will fit, lay it flat on the floor underneath the door that separates the two cats. Shut the door, so now the blanket lies on each side of the rooms and feed both cats on top of the blanket near the door. This way they will be able to smell each other through the crack in the door, plus they will smell each other "blended" on the blanket as well. You will be able to observe what type of reaction each cat presents at this time. Put tasty treats on the blanket so they will acquaint each other's smells with pleasant associations.

Introducing Your New Cat to Your Resident Cat

If you don't see a major battle breaking out during these times, it is safe to let them finally meet. Make sure the first meeting is supervised with more than one person present if possible. Have a blanket or heavy towel nearby in case you have to toss it over a fighting cat to break them apart. Open the door and let them meet nose to nose for the first time.

If you haven't rushed the process, because you either felt sorry for the isolated newcomer, or you didn't have time to follow through all the steps, all you should see is a few initial hisses but no bloodshed. Watch them closely for the first hour, and don't be surprised when they decide to curl up together and go to sleep on your bed.

While the newcomer is isolated, try and go in as much as possible and just sit on the floor and be with the new cat. I always read out loud to my newcomers. This gets them used to my voice. I read very softly for about 10 minutes a day. I also give them an old tee shirt that I exercised vigorously in to permeate it with my own scent, so my scent becomes familiar to them as well.

If the newcomer hides from you in the beginning, don't worry, the cat just needs to get used to the new world opening before her and she will adjust. Just have patience with her, or if she seems really scared, you can play classical music on low to soothe her, take a ticking alarm clock and wrap it with a towel and put it near where she sleeps, this simulates her memory of her mother's heartbeat.

I have used this procedure repeatedly over the years with great success. It is not a fast process, but it is effective and it will stop most problems before they start. As long as you can divide your time between both of these cats prior to meeting each other, so neither one feels neglected, this procedure will serve you well. It has never failed me yet.