



Animal Welfare League
of Frederick County

SOME TIPS FOR INTRODUCING CATS

Cats do not like change so bringing home a new cat can be traumatic for everyone involved, feline and human alike. By following these simple guidelines, you can make that transition much easier for everyone and end up with a happy household with two or more compatible cats.

1. **Isolate the newcomer in its own small room for the first 3-7 days.** This will serve as your new cat's "playpen" and will help it to feel safe and secure despite its new surroundings. Make sure the room has a warm, cozy bed, litter pan, water and food, and toys. You should allow your resident cats to sniff under the door so that both cats become acquainted with each other's scents, in a safe way.
2. **Pay lots of attention to your resident or first cat(s).** This will help them feel more secure that the newcomer is not going to get all of your attention. Remember, cats can be jealous creatures.
3. **Use scented feeding dishes.** Take a small washcloth, rub it on your new cat, and then place it underneath the resident cat's food dish just before feeding time. Do the same for the newcomer cat...only with the resident cat's odor.
4. **Use the scented feeding dish routine, only place each bowl close to the door that separates each cat's space.** In other words, place the scented clothes underneath each cat's feeding dish and place the dishes on each cat's respective side of the door leading to the newcomer's room. Continue this procedure until there is no growling, hissing, or refusal to eat.
5. **Allow limited contact for 5-10 days.** Now is the time to let the cats see each other without full body contact. Stack two 36" high-tension gates in the newcomer's doorway. Rigid plastic mesh baby gates are available at most children's stores. If you have reason to believe that either cat will jump over the gate, then you should place door jams on other side of the door such that only about 2-3 inches of open space is available. This is enough for both cats to sniff noses, swat with their paws, and investigate without the risk of full body contact. Continue this routine until there is no hissing or growling.
6. **Play the switch game.** Put the resident cat in the newcomer's room and let the newcomer out to explore for a few hours before switching them back. Continue this for 3-5 days.
7. **Let the cats work it out for themselves.** Only when you've worked through steps 1-6, should you proceed to this step and let the cats out. Do not put them face to face; rather, give them the chance to explore and greet each other on their own terms. They may growl and hiss at each other but this is okay so long as you can supervise. It is a good idea to keep the cats segregated when you are away until you are sure they are compatible.
8. **Always provide a second litter pan, scratching post, food and water bowls, and toys in separate locations.** This helps to give each cat his or her own space and helps prevent one cat from bullying the other.
9. **Do not allow one cat to become a bully.** If this occurs, be ready with the squirt bottle to break up cat fights and to indicate in no uncertain terms that this bullying behavior will not be tolerated.