

Cat Meets Cat

CatChannel expert Jeanne Adlon, professional cat sitter, explains how to introduce a new cat.

By Jeanne Adlon

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Q: What is the best way to introduce a new cat to my resident cat?

A: Cats are territorial creatures and are never too thrilled when there is a change in their home scene, particularly when it involves sharing their cherished space with a brand new kitty. However, there are ways to get off “on the right paw” and make the introduction and assimilation easier on all parties, including you!

Before you bring your new cat home, prepare a separate room to keep the newcomer in for at least one week. Place a separate litterbox in the room, and find out what type of litter the new cat is accustomed to, if possible. The same is true for food.

Cats react very strongly to smell, so get something that has your resident cat’s smell on it, such as a pet blanket, and put it in the new cat’s room. The reverse should be done as well, so both cats can grow accustomed to each other’s scent. It also is important not to change any of your resident cat’s routines, such as feeding or grooming, and don’t move the litterbox. A new cat is enough change for your resident cat to deal with.

When you bring the new cat home, put him in his room. Do not bring him to your resident cat for inspection —that would be asking for trouble. With the door closed, let the two cats sniff under the door first — remember smells are very important in the cat psyche. When you decide to open the door for a short while, don’t hover, and try not to be nervous because both cats will sense something is wrong. Hissing and arched backs are likely at first, so be patient. You also can try stacking two pet gates on top of each other when the doorway is open. That way the cats can see and sniff safely, but avoid a confrontation.

When they come face to face, have extra treats on hand. (I am all for bribes!) Eventually, you should be able to let both cats interact without supervision. They might not be best buddies, but hopefully feline harmony will prevail enough to allow all to coexist.

Jeanne's Tip of the Week:

Help your cat beat the summer heat by putting ice cubes in the water dish. More tips

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