

## Will a New Kitten Change Our Cat's Bond With Us?

**CatChannel behavior expert Marilyn Krieger discusses taking steps to ensure a resident cat feels safe and loved.**

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**Q:** We are thinking about adopting a new kitten but my husband is concerned that bringing in a new kitten will change Jacob, our resident cat's, bond with us. Jacob is always with us, following us wherever we go. How do we keep Jacob bonded to us while introducing him to the new kitten? We already know how to properly introduce cats to each other.

**A:** Introducing a resident cat to a new cat or kitten is usually a stressful experience for both the cats and their cat parents. Resident cats understandably become stressed, feel their territory is being threatened and can lose their feelings of security and safety. Usually when the introductions are done in a stress-free way, the bonds are maintained between the resident cat and his favorite people. That being said, sometimes cats can form such close bonds to the new kitty that the bonds with their people aren't as strong as they once were.

There are a few steps that you can take that will help reduce the stress of the introductions, as well as maintain and strengthen Jacob's bonds with you and your husband while simultaneously increasing his sense of security. Start by putting Jacob on a consistent schedule, engaging him in activities that he enjoys the same times every day so that he looks forward to them. Feed him his regular meals at the same times every day. If he loves to play, have rollicking play sessions with him. The best times for play sessions are in the morning and the evenings. If Jacob loves to be groomed, schedule daily grooming sessions with him. If one of Jacob's favorite activities is to spend the night with you, then ensure that option is available to him every night. Don't forget lap time and cuddles! If Jacob enjoys sitting in your laps and snuggling, then make sure there are lots of opportunities for kitty love-fests and cuddles. Don't force Jacob to participate; allow him to make the choices. If he doesn't feel like being groomed, petted or played with, then that's OK too. It is important that Jacob feels that he has some control over his activities and interactions.

Clicker training will also help strengthen and maintain the bonds between you. It is enjoyable, challenging and will focus Jacob's attention on fun activities that involve his two favorite people. Clicker training is a successful reward-based system of training that will also help increase his feelings of security in the household while he simultaneously learns new and fun behaviors.