



Introducing a New Cat to Your Other Companions

When introducing a new cat to a household with other pets, initially isolate the new cat to a separate room with its own food, water, litter box and toys. This will allow for all of the animals to become accustomed to the scents and sounds of the new situation. Always treat a new cat or dog for fleas before you bring it home.

Until a veterinary check-up and possible disease testing is performed, use a piece of cardboard or towel to prevent interaction through the space under the door. After the veterinary check, limited interaction under the door can be allowed. Continue with gradual interaction by exchanging bedding and leaving the bedding in the other animals space. If large mats are used for beds and exchanging them isn't practical, a towel that has been rubbed along each pet and around their faces works as well.

At this point, short, supervised visits can be started. In multiple pet households, work with only one of the established animals at a time, and always reward any curious or friendly behavior with treats or petting.

For introducing cats to each other: Have one cat in a carrier, and allow the other cat to approach. To help reduce stress, food, treats or toys can be used as distraction. After several positive sessions, you can allow the cats to walk around and sniff each other, and don't forget to use distraction if things start to get tense. Gradually increase the supervised time together, but don't leave the cats together alone until there have been several visits together without any signs of aggression.

* For introducing the new cat to your dog: Have the cat in a covered carrier. Allow the leashed dog into the room, but distract it using obedience commands and praise. When the dog does notice the covered kennel, praise for any friendly interest, and continue practicing obedience commands. This will allow for the cat to hear and smell the dog without seeing it, preventing negative experiences. After a few positive sessions, uncover the cat's kennel and perform the same routine. If all is going well, the cat can be left loose in the room for the next sessions, but ensure that it will have multiple places to hide or climb to – this will give him or her an added sense of security. Gradually decrease the obedience time with the dog, allowing the dog to investigate the room and cat, if the cat allows. Always watch both the dog and cat for signs of excitement or aggression during your sessions, and immediately distract them and remove the dog if either occurs. Don't leave the animals together until there have been several visits together without any signs of aggression.

* The assumption is made that your dog is not cat aggressive – if your dog has shown aggression or prey drive towards cats in the past, a veterinary behaviorist should be consulted.

There is no set time for how long it will take for the introduction of a new cat into a household, and don't forget that kittens can be irritating to older pets, so confining the kitten while you are out of the house may be appropriate. Baby gates often work well to provide a comfortable area for cats away from dogs.