



Stanford Cat Network

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Introducing Your New Cat to Resident Pets

Some cats who live in the same house may never become the best of friends, but usually learn to at least tolerate each other with a minimum of conflict. You will need to take some time to introduce your cat to other family pets in order to prevent fearful and aggressive problems from developing.

Introducing A New Cat to Other Cats

Confine the new cat to one room with its litter box, food, water, and a bed. Feed the present cats and the newcomer near either side of the door to this room. Gradually move the dishes closer to the door until the cats can eat calmly directly on either side. Next, use two door stops to prop open the door just enough to allow the cats to see each other, and repeat the whole process.

A product called Feliway - available at most pet stores - can be useful when introducing a new cat. It mimics relaxing pheromones that cats exude from their cheek glands. Spraying doorways and furniture where the cats encounter each other with Feliway can help ease introductions.

Switch sleeping blankets between the new cat and resident cats so they have a chance to become accustomed to each other's scent, or rub a towel on the resident cats and then on the new cat to transfer their scent.

Once the new cat is using her box and eating regularly while confined, let her have free time in the house while confining the other cats. This switch provides another way for the cats to experience each other's scent without a face to face meeting. It also allows the newcomer to become familiar with her new surroundings without being frightened by other animals.

A volunteer non-profit organization supporting a spay/neuter, feeding and adoption program for homeless cats at Stanford – by agreement with, but not funded by Stanford University.

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Avoid any interactions between the cats that result in either fearful or aggressive behavior. If these responses are allowed to become habit, they can be difficult to change. If either cat becomes very fearful or aggressive, separate them, and continue the introduction process in a series of gradual steps, as outlined above.

You'll need to add another litter box and scoop and clean all the boxes more frequently. Make sure that none of the cats is being "ambushed" by another while trying to use the box.

Expect hissing, spitting and growling. If a fight breaks out, do not interfere directly. Instead, throw a blanket over each cat, wrapping the blanket around the cat before picking him up. Separate the cats until they have calmed down. It may be best to leave the cats separated when you are not home until you are sure they are getting along well.

Successful introductions usually require time and patience, don't expect things to be perfect overnight!

Introducing a New Cat to a Resident Dog

Dogs and cats who have not experienced each other will require some extra time to become accustomed to each other. Dogs usually want to chase and play with cats, and cats are usually afraid and defensive. You can use any of the techniques described in "Introducing a new cat to other cats."

In addition: If your dog does not already know the commands "sit," "down," "come," and "stay," you should begin working on them. Little tidbits of food increase your dog's motivation to perform, which will be necessary in the presence of such a strong distraction as a new cat.

Begin as described above for introducing to a resident cat. Once the cat is comfortable in the house and has been introduced to the smells of the dog, you can attempt a face to face introduction in a controlled manner. Put your dog's leash on, and command him to either "sit" or

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“down” and “stay,”. Have another family member enter the room and quietly sit down with the cat on his or her lap. At first, the cat and dog should be on opposite sides of the room. Praise both and give treats. Repeat this step several times until both the cat and dog are tolerating each other without fear, aggression, or other uncontrollable behavior.

Next, move the animals a little closer together, with the dog still on a leash and the cat gently held in a lap. If the cat does not like to be held, you can use a wire crate or carrier instead. If the dog gets up from its “stay” position, it should be firmly repositioned, and praised and rewarded for obeying the “stay” command. If the cat becomes frightened, increase the distance between the animals and progress more slowly. Providing the cat with a cat tree or high place to be above the dog will help her feel more confident.

Try to direct each session so the dog is likely to do the right thing and get praise. Although your dog must be taught that chasing or being rough with the cat is unacceptable behavior, if your dog is always punished whenever the cat is around, and never has “good things” happen in the cat’s presence, your dog may associate the cat with unpleasant reprimands.

You may want to keep your dog on a leash and with you when the cat is free in the house during the introduction process. Be sure that your cat has an escape route, and a place to hide.

Keep the dog and cat separated when you aren’t home until you are certain they will both be safe.

Another note : Dogs like to eat cat feces, and although there are no real health hazards to the dog from this habit except possibly increased vomiting, it is usually distasteful to the owners. The best solution is to place the litter box where the dog cannot access it such as behind a baby gate, install an interior cat door to a laundry room, etc.

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