

Cat to Cat introduction

Cats do not like change, so bringing home a new cat can be traumatic. By following the Guidelines below, you can make that transition much easier and have a happy household with two or more compatible cats.

1. **PUT YOUR NEW CAT INTO A SMALL ROOM FOR THE FIRST 3 TO 7 DAYS.** This will be your new cats "playpen" and safety area. Put a litter box, bed, toys, etc. Allow your old cat to sniff at the door.

2. **PAY LOTS OF ATTENTION TO YOUR OLD CAT.** This will help your old cat feel more secure that someone else isn't going to take your affections away!

3. **USE SCENTED FEEDING DISHES.** Next take a small washcloth, rub it on your new cat and then place it under your established cats food dish just before feeding time. Do the same for your new cat, placing a scented cloth or towel under it's food dish.

4. **NOW USE CLOSE SCENTED FEEDINGS.** Next, place each cat's food dish on respective sides of the door where your new cat is kept. Feed each cat on each side of the door, still using the scented towels under the dishes, until there is no hesitation to eat, no hissing or growling. **DO NOT CONTINUE ON UNTIL EACH CAT IS ACTING NORMAL!**

5. **ALLOW LIMITED CONTACT FOR 5 TO 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 newcomers doorway. Rigid plastic mesh baby gates are available at most children's specialty or department stores. If you have reason to believe that either cat will get over the gate set up then use Plan B: jam the door of the isolation room with two hard rubber door stops, one on each side with the door cracked open two to three inches. Make sure that neither cat can fit his head through the opening. Check that the door is secure and will not suddenly pop open or slam shut if a cat's body slams the door aggressively. They will be able to touch noses, whack each other with their paws and investigate without full body contact. Continue the feeding ritual described in number four. Do not proceed to step six until the cats are relatively calm in each other's presence.

6. **PLAY THE SWITCH GAME.** Put your old cat in a room and let the new cat out to explore for a few hours, then switch by confining the new cat and letting the established cat out to explore. Continue this cycle for 3-5 days.

7. **LET THE KITTIES WORK IT OUT.** Open the door to your new cats room and allow them to meet. Do not put them face to face. Allow them to find each other! They may hiss and growl at each other, but this is ok. It is a good idea to keep the cats separated when you are not home to supervise.

8. **ALWAYS PROVIDE** a second litterbox, scratching post, food/water bowls in a totally separate location from each other. It is important to keep the felines happy and having two each of the important items will keep one from turning into a bully.

9. **DO NOT LET ONE CAT BECOME A BULLY.** If one cat always seems to bully the other, be ready with a squirt bottle (set it on straight stream) to break up any cat fights.

10. If you continue to have problems please call the Animal Behavior Helpline at (408) 727-3383 ext. 753.

This information has been derived from the Santa Clara Humane Society.