



Action Volunteers for Animals

INTRODUCING THE NEW CAT TO YOUR CURRENT CAT



(How to ‘purrfectly’ introduce kitty #2 to kitty #1)

It is common knowledge in many multi-cat households that the method used to introduce the new cat to the current household cat determines just how well all the kitties will get along. Before attempting any introductions, make sure that the new cat has spent a minimum of a week to ten days in a **safe room**, separated from your family cat(s) and has been to your veterinarian for a thorough examination. The current cat should also have had its yearly examination by your vet.

Even if your cat is friendly and has been around other cats in the past, introducing a new cat is almost always a challenge. Hence, simply setting the new cat down in the living room can cause hostility, panic, and aggression, upsetting the delicate balance of relationships in the household. Cat territories in the home are firmly established even if you are not aware of them, and these will need to be redefined once a new cat moves in. This can be a stressful time for all concerned - both felines and humans.

How to Introduce the Cats



The first rule is... **Do Not Be in a Hurry!** As humans we are usually in a hurry to zip through things; however, that would definitely be the wrong approach here. Taking your time can help insure that it will be a win-win situation for cats and people. This is a proven method that can take a few days or several months depending on the cats. Even after you have done everything right, the cats may never be “best buddies”, but they can learn to tolerate each other and co-exist.

Introducing cats to each other starts with one sense at a time; hearing first, then smell, sight and finally touch. Provide the cats with positive reinforcement using playtime and the occasional treats.

This process works best as long as the new cat has a **safe room** (also called sanctuary room) as recommended in AVA’s handouts...

- **Adopting A Kitten**
- **Adopting A Cat**

The Steps:

Go slowly, follow the steps in sequence and repeat each step several times before moving on to the next one. If one step does not go well, stop and go back to the beginning, start over and go slower. You may have to tweak each step to better suit you and your cats.

- Keep the new cat isolated in the safe room for 7-10 days. The resident cat will be aware and very curious about what is behind the closed door.
- Spend as much quality time with both cats separately playing and doing what they like as often as possible.
- **Feed** both cats near the safe room door, moving the dishes closer to the door each day.
- **The Sock Rub Exchange** Gently rub a clean sock along the sides of each cat's face and then leave the sock with the other cat to sniff. Leave a treat.
- **The Room Switch**
 - a. Move the new cat to another room and allow the resident cat to come into the safe room. This allows the cats to experience each other's scent and gives the new cat a chance to explore more of the home.
 - b. Put the new cat in a carrier and bring it out to the living or family room and let the cats view each other through the closed carrier door. Repeat this many times and extend the amount of time.
- **The Meeting** In order to give this process the attention it deserves, make sure that you set aside enough time when you will not be distracted or disturbed.
 - a. Nail trimming is a good idea before attempting this step.
 - b. You should have a second person to help you if possible.
 - c. Have treats and toys ready to play with each cat and to distract and redirect any unsuitable behaviour.
 - d. Use the same room and keep the safe room open just in case.
 - e. Keep this session short, 5-10 minutes, 'play it by ear' and repeat this step as often as possible, day after day, lengthening the time if all goes well.

After the Introductions:

- Keep the safe room available.
- Once you feel the cats and humans are ready, leave the cats alone together for 15 -20 minutes and sit on the porch, do some gardening and then go back into check.
- Repeat this kind of activity several times, each time extending the amount of time.
- The next step is to go out for a longer period of time to do some shopping and so on.
- Continue to separate the cats overnight and when you are absent all day for work. This way you get a goodnight sleep and you keep the cats safe.
- Allow the cats to move freely once you are home and for longer and longer periods of time.
- Once you feel confident that the cats have adjusted to each other, you can then decide when to retire the safe room.
- Just remember to have at least two litter boxes; move the safe room litter box, little by little to where you want to have it. Each cat should have its own food dishes.



Remember, successful introductions need time and patience. If you find that this process is too fast for you and your cats, slow it down or start over. You may need to consider using a screen door on the safe room as an intermediary step before moving on to the face-to-face meeting.

"The more love you give, the more love you receive."