

Cats and Proper Introductions – It's a Process...

Start new cat in a separate room

The new cat will have a better chance to become adjusted to a new home if you start small, using one room, rather than the entire house. The new cat will bond with you and learn to trust you with less distraction and a far better focus if you spend time with him or her in their designated room. This room should have a food and water bowl, litter box, a scratching post or Turbo scratcher, toys, and comfortable cat bed. If the kitty is nervous you can leave a radio in the room on low. So, take naps, make phone calls, work on the computer, watch TV and hang out with your new buddy in this room to get to know each other.

Help your current cat adjust

It is respectful to your current cat to give him or her a chance to know that there is another cat in the house before having to directly encounter them. Your cat may want a new buddy and they may become lifelong friends. But for those first few days your cat may feel that she or he just lost 50% of their territory and 50% of their person – that's you. So, giving your cat time to get used to the idea of another cat in the house is just as important as giving the new cat a chance to get to know you and to begin to get to know their new environment.

Bonus reason to start in one room

If there is a loud noise or a scary thing that happens, the new cat that was acclimated to one room will return there as their safe room. Giving you a place to check for them first. Also, if you have people coming to the house for a party or to do work on the house and you want the cat to be safe behind a door, this room will make sense to them because it's their safe room!

Swap their scents

The cats will get to know each other by their scent under the door. We also suggest swapping out their blankets, beds to help them get to know each other.

Feed them at the same time on each side of the door

Help them begin their bond over something they love, FOOD!

Let them see each other

When it feels right, typically after a week, sometimes longer, set up a baby gate and let them see each other briefly. Understand that they can easily hop the gate, so please supervise the brief visit, but start to let them see each other and gauge how they are with each other.

Begin with short visual introductions that could include treats and play to create positive associations. Short, frequent interactions (even just seeing each other) over the course of several days are best in the long term — but keep the interactions positive. If it starts to get stressful stop and start over again another time.

Try Having a Playtime

Once your cats have seen each other, try going into the room and playing with your new cat. In a few minutes, have someone bring your current cat into the room in a very relaxed and casual manner.

Do not hold the cats when they meet each other. Put them on the floor for everyone's safety.

The cats may start hissing and swatting at each other again, some of that is to be expected – they are boundary setting and it's OK. But if they get too aggressive, try distracting them with a loud noise or spray from a water gun, or a sprinkle of water from your hand from a cup. Guide the cats away from each other and separate them again.

If you need to, separate and start over

If needed, you can revert to the door separation. Give it a few days, then attempt to go through the process and introduce the cats again.

Expect It to Take Time

It will likely take a few weeks for your two cats to fully adjust to one another's presence. Just be sure to take things slow and focus on keeping it safe and low stress. And look and listen to the cats, they will let you know! Good luck and contact Orange Street Cats if you have questions or need to work out a strategy!