

Humane Society of West Michigan

Introducing Your New Cat to Other Pets

Before introducing your new cat to your other pet, make sure your existing pets are healthy and current with their vaccinations. Introducing your cat to other pets should be done slowly over a period of weeks. Prepare a spare room (such as a bathroom or small spare bedroom) where your new cat can reside for a while before introduced to the other pets. REMEMBER- it may take a month or more for the new cat to be accepted. A proper introduction is very important and can eliminate many problems from the start.

Cat to Cat

If your new cat is showing signs of illness, please do not introduce it to your existing cat until you consult with your veterinarian.

Make sure the new cat has a place to himself for a few days, allowing him time to adjust.

Spend time with your new cat out of sight of your existing cat. Be sure to lavish attention on your existing cat as well.

Allow your original cat to follow his usual routine. He will be aware that something is different and will seek out the location of the new cat. Allow them to sniff under the door.

After a day or so, swap the cats so they can investigate each other's areas. Getting used to each other's scents is an integral part of adjustment. If all seems to be going well, allow the cats to meet one another through a screen/baby gate or crate, etc. It is normal for cats to hiss and growl at each other, but an all-out physical attack is very inappropriate and rare. However, be prepared with a water spray bottle and a towel or blanket to separate the cats, as allowing them to fight will elongate the introduction period or may even damage the process altogether.

After a comfortable period of introductions through a baby gate, carrier, or monitored encounter, increase the area and time the new kitty can explore outside his safe room. Allow only short periods of contact, increasing as time goes on.

Once the new cat has been allowed access to the rest of the house, leave his safe room intact so he may take refuge there. Improvement in attitudes toward each other should begin in a week or so. Do not be discouraged if it takes longer. The length of adjustment will depend on the personalities of the cats and the length of time your existing cat was a solitary pet. Be sure to lavish attention on all your cats to make everyone feel part of the family. The social interaction level may vary; you may have cats that groom, play and sleep with each other, or just tolerate the existence of the other - and that is okay, too!



Cat to Dog

First, prepare a safe room and have a clear escape route set for your new cat, as a precaution to the encounter. Make sure the dog does not have access to the cat's food and water and especially the litter box! Use a baby gate or cat door to block the dog's access.

When introducing your new cat to a dog, put the cat on a raised surface like a table or dresser. This will help the cat feel less threatened. Put your dog on a leash. Allow them to see each other (try to keep the leash loose) and then distract the dog with a treat or praise. With a flat collar on the dog, you can let him drag the leash around the house so you can grab it if necessary. It is normal for the cat to hiss and growl at first, especially if she has not lived with a dog before. Cats take time to adjust to changes; the more the animals are together in the same room, with you to supervise, the quicker they will adjust.

Arm yourself with a squirt bottle and spray them with water if they start to fight. You can also throw a towel over the cat if she attacks the dog. Make sure the cat has an escape route or can leap to a high place. Do not let the dog chase and/or corner the cat or vice versa.



Separate them where you are not there to supervise until you are comfortable with the situation. Some dogs are too predatory to adjust safely to a new cat. Proceed with caution and, if you find this is the case, never leave them together unsupervised.

If your cat hides, don't worry. Keep the well-behaved dog around as much as possible so the cat can get comfortable with his presence. Make sure the cat has a private place not accessible to the dog where she can eat and drink in peace and feel safe. Ensure that the cat has unthreatened access to her litter box.

Allow the pets to adjust in their own time—be patient and act calm and relaxed. Often they become friends; sometimes they just tolerate each other. Either way you should respect the arrangement.

Cat to Other Pets

Remember, cats are curious. Fish, rabbits, rodents, birds, etc., should be protected from the inquisitive cat. These animals are the natural prey of cats and may become very stressed around your new pet, especially if she is sitting on top of their house! Make sure cages are secure and well maintained; they may have to be in another room altogether.

Children and Cats



If there are children in your household, it is important to teach them how to handle and act with your new cat to avoid stressing the cat and causing potential injury to both. Children learn responsibility by good examples, so please guide your children and regularly monitor the care being provided for your pets.

Here are some guidelines to help your children and your new cat live happily together:

- Instruct children to be calm, quiet and slow moving when being introduced to the cat.
- A kitten or cat should be picked up and held with one hand under its chest and the other hand supporting its hindquarters.
- Handle the cat gently and tell children not to squeeze or hold too tightly. Most children under the age of 5 cannot hold a cat properly without squeezing it too tight. Young children should be taught to sit calmly while you place the cat in their laps. This way everyone is safe and happy.
- Children should leave the cat alone when he is sleeping, eating and using the litter box. Also, instruct youngsters not to put the cat in inappropriate places like the dryer, in a closed box, etc.
- Cats should not be dragged out of hiding against their will.
- Children should not chase the cat around the house. If cornered and frightened, the cat may scratch and bite or may become timid.
- Never leave young children alone with a new pet.
- Teach children appropriate play and petting. Do not allow them to encourage the cat to bite them or run after them. The children should not BE the toys. Provide safe toys for both the cat and the kids.
- Teach children to look for signals that show their pet is getting irritated or over-stimulated. A swishing tail, ears back or gentle nips can lead to being scratched or bitten.
- Always allow the cat to escape if he tries to run. If the cat struggles to get away, let him go.
- Never allow rough handling, as this teaches the cat that it is OK to be rough in return!