



Making New Friends - Cat to Cat Introductions

If you are about to bring home a new cat to meet your resident cat you need to consider how to make the proper introductions.

Be aware that the process of introducing cats to one another could only take a couple of days or it could take several weeks. Let your cats determine the pace of their introductions.

Before your cats ever lay eyes on each other

- Prepare a safe room for your new cat to temporarily reside in.
- Layout extra towels for each cat to get their scent on (part of Step 4).

Don't forget to spend time bonding with them. They need to know that they can trust you in this strange and new environment.

Shared mealtimes

To begin introductions between cats, start with shared mealtimes. Food is often used as a primary tool to help cats learn. In this situation, food is used to help cats learn that there are enough resources available for everyone and trust that no other cat will attack them over food.

The **goal** here is to get your cats to comfortably eat their food near one another. At first, the door remains closed, Steps 1-3. Later, the process is repeated, while giving the cats visual access to one another.

Step 1. Schedule meals and treat time to the same time of day for both cats.

Step 2. On either side of the closed door to the safe room, place each cat's food bowl at a "comfortable distance." A comfortable distance means the distance at which each cat will eat without being distracted. At first, this may be about 5-6ft from the door.

Step 3. Twice a day, you want to try moving their food bowls closer to either side of the door by only a few inches. If your cat will not eat, move the bowl back a bit until it will eat. Let your cats dictate the pace of their introduction.



Continue with Steps 1 and 2 for a couple of days before moving on to Step 4. You want to give your cat time to add their scent into this new environment before introducing the scent of another cat into the same space.

Scent Swapping

Swapping scents between cats is meant to provide cats with a safe opportunity to investigate each other. This method also allows cats to smell another cat on their terms, leaving cats to feel like they are in control of their environment.

Step 4. Take a towel that has the scent of your resident cat and place it in the middle of the floor of the safe room.

Step 5. Take a towel that has the scent of your new cat and place it in the middle of the floor of a room that your resident cat frequents.

Placing the towel in the middle of the room allows a cat to choose to go to it or to move around it. It is *important* to replace this towel after a couple of days because the scent will disappear. Do **NOT** use the towel to rub the scent of one cat onto the other cat.

Continue to exchange scents via towels while cats remain in separate spaces.

Visual Contact

Once your cats are comfortable eating on either side of a closed door, **repeat Steps 1-3**. This time, however, mealtimes occur on either side of an opening that gives cats a line of sight to one another. Depending on your situation, you can choose to use a baby or pet gate with a towel over it, a screen door, or two wedge stoppers on either side of a cracked open door. The opening should not allow a cat to fit their head through.

The Baby or Pet Gate Option

- Drape a towel over the gate.
- Move the food bowls to the farthest comfortable distance from the gate.
- Slowly lift the towel a couple of inches. The cats should be able to see each other from their bowls.
- The cats should continue to eat with the towel partially lifted.
- With every meal or treat session move each bowl a little closer to the gate. Lift the towel another couple of inches.



- Repeat this process until the towel is completely lifted, the cats have a full view of one another, and they are eating directly on either side of the gate from one another. Again, let your cats dictate the pace of their introduction.

The Two Wedge Option

- Set up the food bowls for each cat at the farthest comfortable distance from the door.
- Crack the door open a couple of inches and place the rubber triangles on either side of the door. Neither cat should be able to fit through the door.
- The cats should continue to eat with the door cracked open.
- With every meal or treat session move each bowl a little closer to the cracked open door.
- Repeat this process until the cats are eating directly on either side of the cracked open door. They should be able to see each other through this process.
- Again, let your cats dictate the pace of their introduction. If they stop eating it is likely because they are too close to the door. Move their bowls back a bit until they continue to eat.
- **DO NOT** increase the opening of the door more than a couple of inches throughout this step.

The Screen Door Option

- Replace the door to the safe room with a screen door. The screen door should be fitted with a pet-proof screen.
- Clip a towel to the door.
- Follow the steps outlined in Option A.

Site Swapping

Site swapping is an exchange of cats into each other's spaces. The purpose of site swapping is, again, to allow your cats to explore the scent of each other in a safe and controlled manner. Doing so also allows cats to mix their smells in all spaces. **DO NOT** proceed onto site swapping until you have the cats eating on either side of an open door.

Step 6. Put your resident cat into one of the bedrooms, or another room, with a door



you can close.

Step 7. Take your new cat out of the safe room, put it into a bathroom, and close the door.

Step 8. Let your resident cat out of their room and allow them to enter the safe room. Close the door behind them.

Step 9. Open the door to the bathroom and let your new cat explore the home. Limit access to the main living areas initially or things may become too overwhelming for them.

Step 10. Return your new cat to the bathroom with the door closed.

Step 11. Remove your resident cat from the safe room and put them into another room with a closed door.

Step 12. Return your new cat to their safe room

NOTE: It is best to keep to a schedule and be consistent about the number of times a day you site swap your cats. Neither cat should get too comfortable in any one space for too long.

Sharing the hunting grounds - Fair play, together

Cats can be introduced into the same open space as each other when they have been eating comfortably near one another AND in line of sight of each other for at least 1-2 days.

When introducing cats into the same open space, at least two people should be present and some basic preparations made.

Step 1: Safety First

- Before you allow the cats to enter the same space make the following preparations.
- Block cat access to spaces it can get under. You don't want cats to get into a fight under anything, nor do you want to have to try to get at an angry or scared cat that is under a piece of furniture.
- Have a large piece of cardboard ready to be used to sight block the cats or redirect them. It should be sturdy so they cannot go over or through it.
- Have a towel readily accessible. Over the shoulder is best, so if you need to remove a cat, you can throw the towel over it before picking it up and



removing it from the room.

- Have something that rattles, like pennies in a bottle, to shake at the cats if they start to stare at each other. **DO NOT** use your voice to break up tension between cats.
- **DO NOT** grab or pick up an angry or scared cat.

Step 2. Setting them up for success

- Be sure to know what your cats most highly valued treats and toys are and have them ready for the day they are to meet.
- If you will be using a toy, make sure you know that it will keep your cat's attention at all times. Also, be aware of how long it will maintain your cat's interest.
- To prime your cats for their meeting, deny them of their most highly valued treats and toys for one to two days. You want them more motivated by their toys and treats than the other cat.

Step 3. Sharing center stage

- Begin by playing with or feeding one cat with treats in the room you have chosen for them to meet.
- Keep that cat's attention focused while another person draws the second cat into that same room using treats or a toy.
- Aim to keep each cat going with their activities, for only a minute or two, before withdrawing one cat's attention and presence from the room.
- If a cat stops moving or begins to stare at the other cat, use the cardboard to block their line of sight and guide one of the cats out of the room.
- Try to end the session on a positive note.
- End the day by feeding each cat on either side of an open door to the safe room.
- Repeat these sessions daily but *switch* the cat that remains in the room. No one cat should feel like they entirely own that space.
- Increase each session by a minute or two at a time.
- If your cats are eating well on either side of the open door to the safe room, you can repeat the session a couple of times a day.



Leaving the Safe Room Behind

When all cats have shown that they can show interest in each other without being confrontational they can start to share all spaces. Do not leave your cats unsupervised together until you are certain they are at least accepting of each other's presence.

Continue to encourage positive experiences with the following tips.

- Make sure each cat has their resources (scratchers, beds, window hammock, water bowl, litter box, etc.)
- Be sure to have at least one more litter box than you have cats.
- Try to place each of their resources in their preferred locations.
- Increase their modes of transportation around the home. Cats like having high, medium, and low means of getting around. Having multiple options also means they can avoid traffic jams with people and other animals.
- Continue to provide individual play sessions with each cat. Don't just expect them to entertain each other all day long.

If you find you are struggling with introducing your cats to one another, you can always call our Help Line at 403-723-6019 or book a consultation via our website at <https://www.calgaryhumane.ca/what-we-do/animal-training/private-consultations/>