



Making New Friends – Senior Cat to New Kitten Introductions

Most cats do not adapt well to changes in their environment. Thus, bringing a new kitten into the home can be an extremely stressful event. With these tips, however, you can help your senior cat welcome a new kitten into your home.

Preparing your senior cat

Before bringing your new kitten into your home there are a few things you can do to prepare for your kitten's arrival.

1. Kittens are particularly susceptible to diseases transmitted from other cats. Even if you are pretty sure your senior cat is healthy it is best to just verify with a quick check up at the veterinarian's office.
2. Start using a pheromone spray or diffuser a few days before your kitten arrives, such as Feliway. These types of scents help relax cats during potentially stressful times. Using it a few days ahead will help ensure your senior cat is in the best state to receive a newcomer into the home.
3. Some cats may be more sensitive to changes within the home, including moving furniture around. Adding new items for the kitten into the home before their arrival gives your senior cat an opportunity to get used to them being in their space.
4. Ensure that your senior cat has plenty of places to perch or relax that the kitten cannot access. If your senior cat cannot get away it will be forced to confront the kitten and this may not work out well.

Preparing your home for your new kitten

Before your kitten is given the opportunity to explore any part of your home you will want to first make sure it is safe. The best way to do this is to think like a kitten. Lay down on the floor to see what spaces are good for hiding and block those areas where you would not be able to get your kitten out. Look for loose bits of fabric or items, like cords, that could be pulled, chewed, or swallowed. Look for ways your kitten could pull



itself up onto things, dangle from, and for items that could be knocked off counters and shelves. Consider what plants you have in your home and if they would be dangerous for your cat to ingest. Get rid of dangerous items and put things into safe places out of your kitten’s reach. For a more comprehensive list of things to take into consideration please refer to the itemized handout ‘*Cat and Kitten-Proofing Your Home.*’

Safe room

The first part of settling into your new home means providing your kitten with a safe space of its own. Being in a safe room of its own allows a kitten to become accustomed to the sounds, smells, and other members of the home without becoming overwhelmed. It is a room within which your kitten is surrounded by items of its own. It is also a room in which you can begin to create a bond with your kitten before they are introduced to other non-human members of the home.

Items to include in your cat’s safe room	
Litter box	Food and water
Toys	Bed
An appropriate scratching surface	Something to hide in like a cat cave or box
Something to climb, preferably with a perch	A door to close the room off from the rest of the house

Give your kitten at least a week to settle into your home before letting them explore other areas of the house.

Slow and steady makes for safe introductions

The best way to introduce your kitten to your senior cat is via the safe room. The safe room will provide your senior cat with the opportunity to associate the kitten with positive things. It also protects your kitten from potential harm from your senior cat.

Making these introductions through the safe room sets your cats up to be much more



accepting of one another over the long term. Rushing things can potentially damage any hope of the two cats accepting one another.

A playful Introduction

When it comes time for your kitten and senior cat to be in a shared space, a play and reward system tends to work best. Nevertheless, ensure your senior cat is at a safe enough distance or height from your kitten's reach.

How does it work?

1. Draw or place your senior cat onto an upper surface, like a chair.
2. Keep the senior cat's attention focused with a treat or new toy.
3. Draw your kitten into the room with a wand toy.
4. While the kitten is playing, provide your senior cat with another treat.
5. The goal here is to keep each cat from focusing on the other cat for any length of time.
6. Aim to keep each cat going with their individual activities, for only a minute or two, before withdrawing the kitten from the room.
7. Slowly increase the amount of time, by a minute or two, that your senior cat and kitten are in the same space together.

Living in a shared space

When your senior cat and kitten begin to occupy the same spaces in the home, keep these things in mind:

- Use positive reinforcement when good interactions happen.
- When your senior cat pushes back on your kitten testing its limits - let the senior cat determine its boundaries so long as the senior cat does nothing more than hiss and swat.
- Ensure your senior cat always has places to retreat or get away from your kitten.

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/services/pet-training/private-consultations/>