

Advice from the MSPCA at www.mspca.org

Bringing Your New Cat Home

Introducing a cat to a new home is very stressful for the cat. To help ease some of this stress we have a few suggestions

When you bring your new cat home, place the carrier in a room and open the door. Do not force the cat to come out, let him take his time. Your new cat needs time to adjust to his new surroundings. Visit with the cat often but do not force interaction. Let the cat come to you. Have some food treats with you to make a positive association.

Introduction to resident cat

If you have other cats in the house it may be a good idea to set up a safe room for the new cat. Before you bring your new cat home, prepare a small quiet room with a litter box, food, water, toys and scratching post. When you bring the new cat home, put him in this room to adjust to the new house (using the above method). This will also allow the cats to get used to one another's scent before they actually meet. Once your new cat seems comfortable in its room, you can slowly introduce the cats to each other.

The introduction process should go as follows: Open the door to the new cat's room a few inches and let the cats sniff each other. Provide food treats and play to each cat. If they hiss, growl or swat at each other, close the door and try again later. This is to be expected, so don't give up. When the visits through the cracked door are going well, open the door for short supervised visits (half an hour at first). Provide play and treats to each cat when they are together.

Continue doing this, increasing the amount of time the cats are together. Never punish a cat for being aggressive toward another. This will just make them more upset and associate bad things with the other cat. If things get out of hand, calmly separate the cats. Some fighting should be expected while they work out their territories.

Expect it to take from two weeks to two months or more for the cats to establish the rules of territory with each other.

Introduction to resident dog

If you have a dog at home, it may be a good idea to set up a safe room for the new cat as described above. When the cat is comfortable in the safe room, allow him to explore the rest of the house for short periods of time when the dog is outside. When the cat seems comfortable in the house it's time to have him meet the dog.

Make sure the dog is under control when interacting with the new cat. When the cat is on a high surface, bring in the dog on leash. Walk the dog around the room but don't let it off the leash. Do not allow the dog to act inappropriately with the cat (barking, lunging, chasing). Mildly correct him if this happens. Start with half hour visits and then return the cat to the safe room. Slowly increase the amount of time you allow these supervised visits. Always reward friendly visits with praise, food treats and play. Make a positive association for both of them. Do not rush the introduction or force them to be together.