

## POINTS TO PAWNDER SERIES

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### Introducing Your New Cat To Your Resident Cat

After discovering the joy of owning a cat, many owners find it impossible to ignore the urge to add another cat to the family. If handled carefully, this can be a wonderful experience – giving you and your family another animal to love, and your resident cat a companion to play with. But, if handled incorrectly, bringing a new cat into the household can be a disaster, causing stress on the animals and people in the house, and often, even resulting in you having to surrender the new cat to a shelter, where she may be put to sleep. So before you rush out to find a new feline friend, consider whether it's the best decision for your family and resident cat. And if you do decide, after careful consideration, to extend your family, be aware that it may take some time before your household returns to the calm, peaceful retreat you once had. The following information is meant to help you successfully introduce your new cat to your resident cat.

#### Factors To Consider During Cat-Cat Introductions



There are many things to consider when introducing cats for the first time. The size, gender, age, individual temperament, and health status of each cat all contribute to their initial encounter and eventual coexistence. It's virtually impossible to predict how one cat will respond to another.

There are, however, several general guidelines you should follow when introducing a new cat to your resident cat:

- TAKE YOUR TIME, and realize it could take weeks or months for the two cats to feel comfortable with one another. A gradual process of discovery and investigation is best – DON'T RUSH THINGS.
- Spend extra quality time alone with each cat during the transition period. This will reassure your resident cat, and establish bonds with the new cat.
- You should consider using the five-step introduction process described below, and carefully supervise your cats' initial interactions. Naturally, you should NOT leave the cats alone together until you're reasonably sure they won't hurt one another.

#### "The Introduction" Step-By-Step

Here is a basic five-step approach that Indiana-PAW recommends for increasing the likelihood that your resident cat and your new cat will learn to coexist peacefully:

- **STEP ONE:** Settle your new cat in a room with water, food, a litterbox, safe toys, and a safe place to hide (a cat carrier with a towel inside is fine).
- **STEP TWO:** Let the new cat become comfortable in this room for 3-4 days.
  - DO NOT allow the cats to interact during this period.
  - However, DO allow your resident cat to sniff under the door to the room where the new cat is.

- **STEP THREE:** Feeding tends to relieve animals' stress and anxiety. So:
  - Place your resident cat's food dish near the door to the new cat's room.
  - Gradually, move the new cat's food dish closer to the inside of the door.
  - Feed the cats at the same time so they are separated only by the closed door.
  - Continue this until neither cat growls, hisses or spits when she senses the other cat is nearby.
- **STEP FOUR:** Once you reach a point where you can feed both cats, separated by a door, with no growling, hissing or spitting, try propping the door open about one inch to allow the cats to view each other without being able to make contact. Leave the door like this for a few days.
- **STEP FIVE:** Once you've observed no serious hissing or aggression, you can open the door and allow the cats to interact on their own time.
  - Do not force either cat to go from one space to another.
  - DO NOT leave the cats alone together until you're reasonably sure they won't hurt one another. Supervise their initial interactions, and be prepared to intervene if they start to fight. This is especially important if one of the cats is substantially larger than the other or has claws where the other doesn't, putting the smaller and/or declawed cat at risk for injury.
  - Only let the cats interact for 10-15 minutes blocks of time in the beginning. Then separate them. Do this several times a day until you are sure they're tolerating one another.
  - Reward both cats with treats when they come up to one another without hissing or growling.

#### Parting Thoughts

- Remember, with time, most cats learn to tolerate one another!
- The best thing to do is to go as slowly as necessary - don't rush the introduction.
- Be patient. Some cat-cat introductions go very smoothly, while others may take weeks or months. With time and patience, your house will be peaceful again!
- ***Remember, you don't have to do it alone! Consult with your veterinarian and/or an animal behaviorist if you are having difficulty with your introduction. They may be able to help you.***

#### Suggested Reading

- San Francisco SPCA, "Protocol For Cat To Cat Introductions," [http://www.sfspca.org/behavior/cat\\_library/cat2cat-intro.pdf#search='catcat%20introductions'](http://www.sfspca.org/behavior/cat_library/cat2cat-intro.pdf#search='catcat%20introductions')
- Humane Society of the United States, "Introducing Pets To A New Cat," [http://www.hsus.org/pets/pet\\_care/our\\_pets\\_for\\_life\\_program/cat\\_behavior\\_tip\\_sheets/introducing\\_pets\\_to\\_a\\_new\\_cat.html](http://www.hsus.org/pets/pet_care/our_pets_for_life_program/cat_behavior_tip_sheets/introducing_pets_to_a_new_cat.html)

**Important Note:** Indiana-PAW's POINTS TO PAWNDER SERIES is intended to provide quick tips to help citizens address common pet health and behavior questions. It is not intended to replace consultation with one's veterinarian and/or a trained behavior specialist.