

How to introduce a new cat to your existing cat in the home

It can be daunting when introducing a new cat to your home when you already have a cat however, with some planning and taking it slowly, cats will usually learn to tolerate each other and can even become good friends.

Before introducing the cats physically, follow these stages:

- Set up a separate room with everything your new cat needs to ensure it has its own space to adapt to their new home.
- Next, introduce them to each other's scent. Swap scents by stroking each cat with a clean, soft cloth and then leave the cloth in the other cat's environment to sniff when the cats are ready to investigate. Keep swapping the scents until the cats show no reaction to the smell. If the cats avoid the scent cloth, this stage will take longer.
- You can then allow them to see each other, but not be able to touch one another. If possible, place a glass or mesh door between the cats and allow each cat to approach or hide as they choose. Do not attempt a face-to-face introduction until the cats either ignore each other or show positive signs such as attempting to rub heads through the divider.
- When it is time to introduce your cats face-to-face, keep these meetings short and make them good experiences by using treats and toys or during feeding times, to help form positive associations with one another before returning them to their separate rooms.
- Start in a room preferably in neutral territory where they can stay at a distance from each other, and ensure they are supervised and have easy escape routes available for both cats, such as access to furniture and shelves higher up.



- It is important to break any eye contact between the cats, allowing them to retreat from each other.
- Gradually start to fuss or play with the cats for a short time so their attention is on you before offering treats to encourage them to come closer.
- Once the cats become more comfortable in each other's company, try feeding them in the same room with their bowls far apart, placing a chair between the feeding bowls may help them feel less threatened. Over time move the bowls closer together but do not place them side by side as cats can feel vulnerable when they are eating. Place food and water bowls slightly away from the wall, so each cat has space to sit with its back to the wall and can survey the room while eating or drinking. If this is tolerated, then gradually increase the time they spend together.



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- It can take days or weeks for cats to tolerate each other so do not give up if there is some hissing and spitting, just go back a stage. They are unlikely to fight but have a blanket ready in case you need to separate them. Do not chase or shout at them as this will only lead to them associating one another with bad things.

Once your cats are living in the same areas of your home, it is important to continue to look out for signs of anxiety or intimidation from either cat, and take immediate action, as if left it can lead to stress-related issues such as messing, over-grooming and cystitis.

Signs to look out for include staring, claiming sleeping areas, physically pushing the cat away when seeking attention from owner, pouncing on other cat when asleep, blocking cat flap, and blocking access to litter tray.

To reduce the possibility of intimidation, follow these steps:

- Provide each cat with their own food & water bowls, litter tray, bed, toys, scratching posts and that they are positioned in different areas of your home to limit competition.



- Leave dry food down in separate bowls or divide wet food into frequent small meals to avoid competition at mealtimes and position each bowl to enable each cat to eat without needing to turn their backs on one another.

- If possible, provide separate entry and exits points to your home i.e., cat flaps, doors, or windows, to enable each cat access unhindered.

It is important not to rush these stages, but following these tips gives your cats the best chance of being able to live together.

If you are still experiencing any issues, please contact St. Giles Animal Welfare on **01823 490333**.

