

If you're bringing a new cat into your home, be patient. The introduction must be gradual. It takes most cats 8 to 12 months to develop a friendship with a new cat. Many cats who don't become buddies learn to avoid each other, but some cats fight when introduced and continue to do so until one of the cats must be rehomed. If your cat has lived harmoniously with other cats in the past, the odds are good that she'll adjust to a newcomer. However, it's impossible to predict whether or not any two individual cats will get along.

- **Step 1: Controlling First Impressions.** The first impression a new cat makes when she meets your resident cat is critical. If two cats display aggression during their first meeting, this may set the mood for their future relationship. For this reason, it's best to separate your resident cat from your new cat when you first bring her home so that you can control their initial meeting.
 - The two cats should be able to smell and hear—but not see or touch—each other.
 - Each cat should have her own food and water bowl, litter box, scratching post, bed, etc.
 - Feed the cats near the door that separates them so they learn that coming together (even though they can't see each other) results in a pleasant experience. In addition to regular cat food, feed the cats extra-special treats near the door as well, like tiny pieces of tuna, salmon, cheese, chicken or liver.
 - After two to three days, switch the cats' locations so they can investigate each other's smell. This also allows the new cat to explore a different section of your home.
 - After a few more days, play with each of the cats near the door. Encourage them to paw at toys under the door. Eventually the cats may play "paws" under the door with each other.
- **Step 2: Letting the Cats See Each Other.** After a week or so, assuming that you see no signs of aggression at the door (no hissing, growling, etc.), you can introduce the cats to each other. Position two baby gates in the door frame, one above the other. When the cats notice each other, say their names and toss treats to them, aiming the treats behind them. Over the next few days, continue to encourage feeding, eating treats and playing near the barrier, gradually offering the cats' meals, treats and toys closer to the screen.
- **Step 3: Letting the Cats Spend Time Together.** The next stage is to permit the cats to spend time together without a barrier between them. Supervise these initial face-to-face interactions carefully.
 - Keep a squirt bottle handy in case the cats begin to fight.
 - As the cats become more familiar with each other, allow them longer and longer periods of time together.
 - If one cat spends most of her time hiding, or if one cat continuously harasses and pursues the other, consider hiring a qualified expert, such as a Certified Applied Animal Behaviorist (CAAB or ACAAB) or a board-certified veterinary behaviorist (Dip ACVB).

Final Tips. If you're bringing a new cat into a household with multiple cats, introduce each resident cat to the newcomer individually. After each of your cats has met the new cat one-on-one, you can start to allow all of the cats to mingle as a group. Your cats will be more likely to get along if they're happy in their environment. Look at the layout of your home. Make sure there are plenty of hiding spots for your cats. Some like to sit up high, on shelves and on kitty condo perches. Frightened cats, on the other hand, tend to hide under and behind things, so make sure you provide spots at floor level as well. Place food, water and litter boxes out in the open so your cats don't feel trapped when they access these resources. Make sure you have a litter box for each cat, plus at least one extra.