

Cat-Cat Introductions

One of the most common reasons for cat scuffles is a poor introduction. All too often, a new cat is introduced into the home by simply plopping them in the middle of the home and letting things “work themselves out.” Unfortunately, things often don’t work themselves out, and recovering from a bad first impression can be very challenging.

- **Consider the Individual**

The most important thing to keep in mind is the individual personalities of both the resident and the new cat. When looking for a new cat, consider behavioral temperament and how it will compliment or clash with your established cat. For example, an elderly cat will deteriorate and become irritable by a hyper kitten.

- **Separate Initially**

Since cats are so sensitive to change, they should be kept in a “base camp” room for at least the first two weeks. Introduce the scent of the resident cat while each pet is in this separation period. The more each pet can “meet” through the senses without physically or visually meeting, the better.

- **Go Slowly!**

Start the introduction by feeding the two cats on opposite sides of a closed door. Begin with the food dishes a few feet away, and move the dishes closer to the closed door each day. Then, place a baby gate in the doorway, cover it with a sheet, and feed both cats on opposite sides of the baby gate. Gradually lift the sheet a few inches higher each day. The cats will start to sneak a peek at each other and build a positive association with each other. Once both cats are eating peacefully without issue on opposite sides of an uncovered baby gate, you can start allowing supervised visits and play sessions. Remember that this is all on THEIR timeline. The worst thing you can do for a cat introduction is to rush it.

- **Keep it Positive**

Once your cats are living in the same space, conduct play sessions with both cats in sight of each other. Make sure they continue eating while being able to see each other. Keep those positive associations going between the two cats.

- **Meet their Needs**

Cats are very territorially-sensitive. Provide vertical spaces such as wall shelves, perches, and cat trees to give your cat a sense of ownership and security as the other cat wanders below. Place vertical space in especially narrow areas of your home. You also want to consider their more basic needs. Make sure litter boxes are spaced out in a way that the cats cannot feel cornered or ambushed by the other cat. Also, increase the number of scratching posts in the home, since cats mark their territory by urinating or scratching. So make sure to give them plenty of appropriate places to scent mark or they’ll find inappropriate alternatives like your couch or laundry pile!

If you have any issues with your cat-cat introductions/interactions- or any other behavioral issue- contact the HAWS Behavior Department at (262)542-8851 ext. 204. HAWS offers 2 complimentary behavior consultations for the life of your HAWS adoptee. We are here to help!