



## Stress free - Cat Introductions

What is a good introduction?

Cats are social animals, but they are also very territorial. The sudden arrival of a new cat in what they see as their territory will evoke a negative reaction in them and cause a lot of stress for them and you.

We also must take in consideration that it can be an incredibly stressful time for your new pet. Especially rescue cats we will never know the trauma that a rescue cat had to endure before coming into a new home.

That is why a slow gradual introduction is especially important to lay the foundation for happy future relationships between your pets.

Cats are creatures of habit and any minor change in their environment can be very traumatic for them and may lead to behaviour problems like aggression, inappropriate toileting, spraying or excess vocalisation.

The occasional altercations between cats living in a multi-cat household is normal - let us face it we cannot all get along every second of every day.

In this introduction plan you want to manage your cats so that they stay out of trouble in the critical introduction period from the start up to 3months/6months, and in some cases it might take up to a year.

In this critical stage you want to try and avoid any type of fights or intimidation between your cats at all costs.

How do we do this you ask?

- Through a management plan that will start with separation and slowly introduce them in a step-by-step plan.

If you stick to this introduction plan from the start, you will have the best chance at creating a happy environment for you and your pets.

I know introducing new cats to your existing cats can be very frustrating. Research shows that our pets also have emotions and knowing how to assist them and make this process easier. By giving them enough time patience and positive associations, you will be able to get your cats to at least tolerate each other and hopefully help them become good friends eventually.



It can take up to a year for your existing adult cats to get completely comfortable with the new additions, so do not rush it.

It is always a clever idea to take your cats for a check-up at the vet to make sure that there are not any underlying health issues that might get in the way of a successful introduction process.

Every cat is different, and every situation vary, so please contact a professional or contact us if you are concerned at any stage of this introduction.

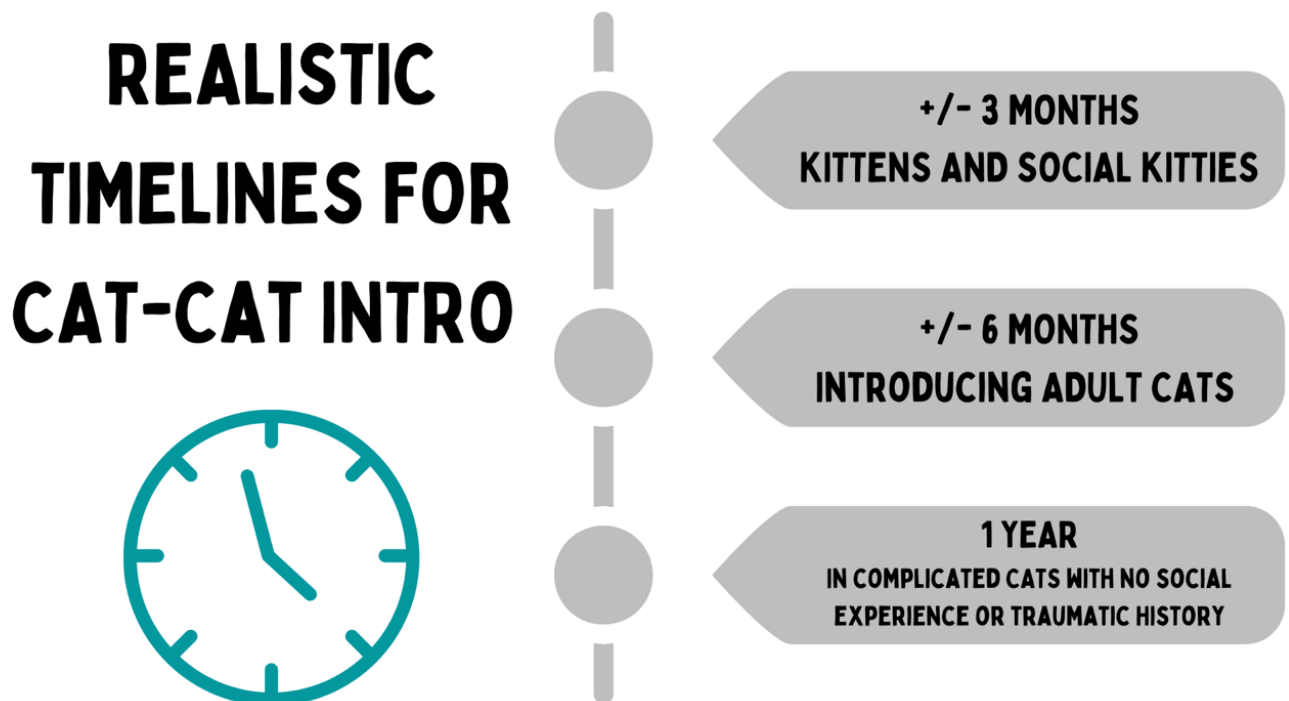
# The Plan

There are three parts to the introduction process that you must keep in mind.

- Firstly, we take enough **time** for your cat to adjust through each step.
- Secondly, we are introducing your cats through their **senses** so smell, sight and touch (in that order) and each step will incorporate the next sense.
- Thirdly, we use classical conditioning to form a **positive association** with each other, in other words, we want them to like each other so we will give them a reason to do so.

## Time:

How much time? Use +/-1-2 months in each step as a guide.



Many factors can play a role, and each cat is an individual, but it depends on how your cats react in each step as to when you will move on to the next step. You only want to move on when neither of the cats are reacting in any negative way anymore.

## By one sense at a time, we mean:

- Firstly smell, it plays a massive role in feline communication, and if you spend enough time on this step the rest of the process will be much easier.
- Secondly, sight, where they will be allowed to see each other until they are so used to seeing each other that it is not evoking any negative emotions anymore

- Lastly, touch or, in other words, let your cats interact with each other under supervision

## ONE SENSE AT A TIME

FIRST  
SMELL



THEN  
SIGHT



LASTLY  
TOUCH

THROUGH  
SCENT SWAPPING  
& TIME SHARE



(NO TOUCH)



SUPERVISED  
INTERACTIONS

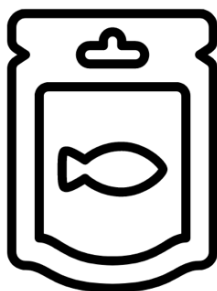


Positive Association, give them reason to like each other:

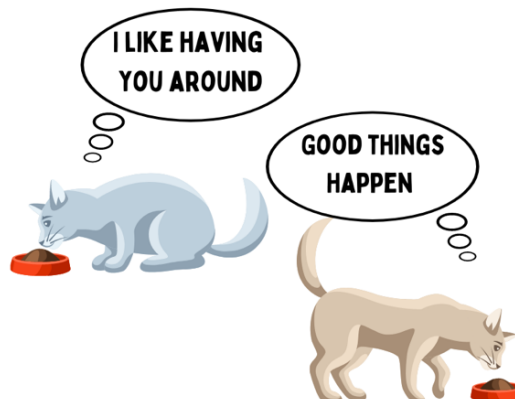
You will start by separating your cats knowing that separation is only a small part of the process – you can keep your cats separated for months but if you don't help them form positive associations with each other the outcome will not be as good.

## GIVE THEM REASON TO LIKE EACH OTHER THROUGH POSITIVE ASSOCIATION

TREAT TIMES



FEEDING TIMES



PLAY TIMES



If you follow the 3 steps above you will lay a good foundation for your cats and give them enough time to adjust to the changes gradually.

## Step 1

### Smell and Scent Swapping

When you bring your new kitty home you want to prepare by:

- Creating a safe space like a bedroom for your cat that is not going to intrude on your existing cat's space.
- Make sure that they have food, water, beds, scratch posts and their litter box in the room. Place the litter box away from the food station.
- Add some enrichment in the form of toys to keep them busy.
- Always make sure that all your cats are registered and have microchips and collars with an identity tag.

For the first few months while you are swapping scents your will have to manage your cats and keep them separate from each other - so they won't be able to see each other.

It will take about a month for your new kitty to adjust so make sure you keep them inside and safe from running away.

Even if you are not introducing your cats face to face just yet, it is important that the new addition to the family gets familiar with the surroundings and where the resources are.



## Scent Swapping:

From the first day you can start to swap scents between your cats.

There are several ways to swap scents:

- Wiping a new face cloth or towel over your kitty's facial scent glands that are situated on their cheeks and placing it under the other cat's food bowl will give them a positive association with each other's scent.
- Swapping blankets or beds daily.
- Time - yes time - over a couple of weeks your new cat will start to be part of the overall house scent and won't be such a novel smell in the house any longer.

## Time Share

*After the initial few weeks you can start with time share and you can use it throughout the rest of the introduction process.*

Time share is when you create 2 areas or territories inside your house that can be closed off from one another. For example having a door between your living areas and your bedroom can create 2 separate areas. This is going to depend from house to house so you will have to be creative.

- Make sure each area has a feeding station and a litter box available.
- Swap the cats between these areas at different times of the day. Your kitties will do a good job of leaving scent trails around for the other to find and this is a great way to swap scents between cats.
- This is also a good way for your new cat to get used to their new surroundings gradually without having to worry about upsetting the other residents.



Time Share areas A & B

Area B can potentially be increased by adding a temporary doorway at point C.



## Step 2 Seeing

So your kitties are starting to get used to smelling each other around the house and do not react negatively when they smell each other.

You have reached the Seeing Step:

In this step, we still need to manage your kitties to avoid any negative interactions, so you still need to have a safety net in place.

Essentially, we need to desensitise your kitties to see each other now that they are comfortable with the new kitty's scent and do not want them to be able to interact in a way that can lead to any hostile or aggressive behaviour that can escalate quickly.

In this step, you can (depending on your space) use a screen door or a baby gate to separate kitties or invest in a kitten pen that can be used in a shared area like the lounge to keep one cat safe with their food, water, and litter tray.

This is a crucial step because you need to prevent fearful or aggressive interactions AT ALL COSTS between your cats.

This is for all your kitties to get used to having each around but without them being able to attack or intimidate each other.

This step is to desensitise your cats to seeing each other and having the other one in their space but to keep everyone safe.

In this continue swapping living areas (time share) when you are not there to supervise them.

Important: These visits will be under supervision and if any of your kitties look stressed or looks like they are not coping, take a step back in the plan and spend another week or two on scent swapping in Step 1.

## Positive Association:

We also want to give them reasons to like each other!

These interactions will include feeding, play and treat time (Classical Conditioning)

This is the crucial time when you will give your kitties reasons to like each other.

We can do that in the following ways:

- Feeding a special treat or soft food will give your cats a chance to form a positive association with each other. Using meal times, treat times, attention times, or just fun playtime are all easy ways to help your kitties to form a "positive association" with each other.

- At first, it will be done with your new cat in his safe room or behind the door or if you have moved on to Step 2 “Seeing”, it can be done behind a high baby gate, sliding door or in the kitten pen.
- Remember always to give positive feedback to your kitties. Do not ever shout or raise your voice. Instead interrupt the situation calmly when things get tense or stressful.
- If your existing cats tolerate having your new cat around, give them rubs and attention and tell them what good boys/girls they are (if they enjoy that kind of attention).
- If you notice any negative, aggressive behaviour, end the session.
- Start off with shorter sessions (one or two minutes) and build on from there.
- Rather “quit while you are ahead” in these sessions and end them on a positive note . Try not to let any negative feelings escalate.
- You can use soft food or use high value treats in the introduction sessions. Something like meaty treats or fish is always popular.

## Step 3 – Touching

Well done for managing your kitties to get to this step.

Once you are comfortable that your cats are tolerating each other you can let them interact under supervision until you are 100% sure that they are comfortable being in each other’s company.

Signs that your cats are not coping:

Excessive growling, staring, stalking each other (not playful), inappropriate elimination, fights that cause damage.

# GIVE THEM REASON TO LIKE EACH OTHER

**THROUGH  
SUPERVISED**

**TREAT TIMES  
FEEDING TIMES  
PLAY TIMES**





Encourage calm/friendly signals like:

Relaxed body postures.

Blinking, turning heads away to break eye contact from each other, ignoring each other and yawning.

Stop when there are any:

Stiff or tense body postures.

Hissing, staring, charging or growling.

Rather end a session early before it escalates into something more serious.

REMEMBER - We want to set them up for success!

## Basic Needs of Cats

The basic needs we refer to here is focussed on behaviour and training and does not include any health advice. Please make sure all your pets are healthy by keeping to your regular vet visits and making sure their vaccinations and parasite treatments are up to date.

By feeding a decent quality diet you will save costs on vet visits and your pet will be healthy and with you for longer. Please discuss your pet's health needs with your veterinarian.

## Food and Litter Boxes

It is especially important to give your cats enough options when it comes to food and water stations, scratch posts and litter boxes. Giving them 3 or 4 different options will decrease chance meetings or intimidation when it comes to these essential resources.

So, make sure that there are an adequate number of litter boxes in various territories as well as multiple food and water stations around the house. In general, we advise one of each of the above-mentioned essentials for each one of your cats +1 extra. So, if you have 2 cats you need 3 litter boxes, 3 feeding and 3 water stations.

## Toys and Enrichment

Interactive toys like the fishing rod toys are a fun way to play with your cats in your sessions where you are trying to form positive associations.

Playing with you cats with the toy will be extremely rewarding to them because they get to practice their predatory sequence which is “eye-stalk-chase-pounce-bite”. Performing these behaviours will give an internal reward (releases all those feel-good endorphins) for cats and while they are distracted by the toys, they will not be able to intimidate or stare at the other cats thus creating a win-win situation for all.

Always end a play session off with a treat or a meal – otherwise you will leave your cats frustrated and dissatisfied.

Food dispenser or puzzle toys are great for enrichment as it gets your kitty to work for food and treats.

Not only does it stimulate their seeking and exploring behaviour, but it will stimulate them and keep them out of mischief.

Adding vertical levels to their living areas is a wonderful way to add space and territory for cats. This can be done through adding cat climbers or shelves that cats can use to climb and explore.

Adding hiding holes in different living areas will add enrichment for cats that feels safe in smaller spaces.

## Scratch Posts

Scratching is a normal cat behaviour and cats use it not just to sharpen their claws but also to mark their territory.

To prevent your cats from scratching your expensive furniture give them the appropriate scratch posts. These posts should be close to the windows or doors that your cat normally uses to enter or exit the house.

Scratch marks are used as a visual marking for any other cats that might be coming into your house.

You get all diverse kinds of scratch posts and your choice in scratch post will depend on your cat's preference and where they like to scratch.

Some cats prefer to scratch on a horizontal surface therefore adding mats will stop them from scratching on expensive carpeting.

## Calming Products

There are many calming products available on the market, but Feliway diffusers and calming collars are extremely helpful to reduce stress for cats.

These products are wonderful tools to help aid the introduction process. If you see that one of your kitties is not coping with the new situation you can use these to help cats adjust more quickly to an unfamiliar environment or help restore calm.

I would suggest using these products from the start until your cats are completely comfortable with each other.

Diffusers can be put in shared living spaces and calming collars can be used on specific individuals.

Ask your vet if you are not sure which calming products will be right for your situation.



## **DO'S & DONT'S**

**DO: GET PROFESSIONAL HELP FROM A QUALIFIED BEHAVIOUR PROFESSIONAL IF YOU THINK ANY OF YOUR PETS ARE NOT COPING.**

**DO: TAKE A STEP BACK IN THE PLAN AND START FROM THERE IF YOU HAVE MOVED ON TO THE NEXT STEP TOO SOON.**

**DO: GET IN TOUCH WITH US WITH ANY QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS**

**DON'T: FORCE INTERACTIONS**

**DON'T: ASK FOR ADVICE FROM STRANGERS ON SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS UNLESS IT'S ON REPUTABLE BEHAVIOUR GROUPS LIKE "THE PET PROFESSIONAL GUILD" OR "ASK A BEHAVIOURIST"**