

NZCF Tips for Bringing a New Cat Home

Prepare a safe room. A safe starter room or sanctuary for the new cat will provide the cat with the quiet and safety it needs while becoming familiar with the scents and sounds of your home. The starter room can be any size but must have a secure door and ceiling.

Cat-proof the safe room. Remove breakables and items that can harm a cat. Always put wand toys away in a secure cupboard when not in use - the string on a wand toy can lead to strangulation and death. Close all windows and doors. Be careful when entering or leaving the room that the door is securely closed.



Give kitty a place to hide. New cats are often nervous and like to hide. Cardboard boxes or sheets draped over chairs make ideal hiding spots. If you've adopted a shy cat, we recommend removing large items of furniture from the room, such as beds and dressers. It is much easier to interact with a cat hiding in a box than a cat hiding under a bed.

Help your new cat get to know you. Place a t-shirt or a piece of your clothing that contains your scent in the safe room.

Equip the safe room with cat food, water and litter. Place food and water on one side of the room and an open (unenclosed) litter box on the other side. Shyer cats may not eat much during the first 24 to 48 hours and may experience temporary diarrhea from stress. If your cat has not eaten in 48 hours, try some extra tasty treats such as canned tuna or salmon. If this is not successful, you may want to consult your veterinarian for advice.

Give your new cat a new post. Put a new scratching post (at least one metre tall) inside the safe room. Scratching is a natural and comforting behaviour for cats. It's also important that the scratching post is new and has not been used by other cats. Your new cat does not want to be stressed by the smells of other cats while it is adapting to his or her new surroundings.



Feliway saves the day. If your new cat is an adult, you can use a store-bought product called Feliway. Feliway imitates natural cat pheromones and helps a new cat feel more comfortable. Feliway comes in a spray and diffuser form. It is available from pet stores and veterinarians. More information can be found here: <https://www.feliway.com/nz>

Give your cat some cat toys for entertainment. Provide toys such as mice and balls in the safe room for when you are not around.

Spend time with your new cat. In the beginning, visit frequently for short periods of time. Visiting can mean interacting directly with the new cat in the form of play or petting, or quietly reading a book or chatting on the telephone in the same space as your new companion. Keep in mind that a nervous cat may growl, hiss, twitch its tails or pull its ears back. The best response is to speak softly followed by giving the cat some time alone.

Transition beyond the safe room. When you and your new cat have established a trusting relationship, the cat is ready to begin exploring the house. Be sure to begin this process when you are home to supervise. Close most of the doors so the cat begins its orientation in stages. Too many new spaces at once can be stressful and frightening.

Ready to explore the house. Remember, integration into the rest of the house is dependent on the personality of your new cat (as well as your existing pets). Sometimes the integration process can begin in just two to four days; however, sometimes it is best to wait a couple weeks. Shy cats in particular may need a longer integration period.

Tips for Kids

To help introduce your new cat to children, we've included a little message with some tips from the cats:

Hi there! I'm your new cat and I'd like to tell you a few things:

- Your house is brand new to me, so I am a bit nervous and shy.
- It will take me a few days to feel comfortable, so please be patient.
- Please don't chase me; I will start to play when I feel more comfortable.
- I will learn about my new house by smelling everything.
- Because I'm new, I might run away from loud voices, noises and fast movements.
- Because I'm a bit nervous, I might hiss; that's how I say, "I am scared."
- I need quiet times just like you do, so I might find a hiding spot and take a nap.
- Please put my litter box in a quiet spot and let me use it alone.
- Please remember to pick up all my legs when you carry me or my tummy will hurt.
- I won't mean to, but since I have claws I might scratch you if we play too much.
- I'm not sure where to sleep yet, so I might try a lot of places before I get comfortable.
- Please pet me gently and don't pull my tail; I am small and can be hurt easily.
- Make sure you don't let me outside. I don't know where I live and I'll get lost.
- Oh, and one last thing. Please remember to close the door to outside behind you. I'm naturally very curious!

If Doesn't Happen Overnight

The 3/3/3 rule is a general guideline for the adjustment period of a pet after adoption. Every pet is unique and will adjust differently. Please have patience and allow your new pet time to settle in.

		
<p>3 Days <i>To Decompress</i></p>	<p>3 Weeks <i>To Learn Your Routine</i></p>	<p>3 Months <i>To Start to Feel at Home</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeling overwhelmed • May feel scared or unsure of what's going on • Not yet comfortable to be "himself" • May not want to eat or drink • Shuts down and/or hides under furniture • Tests the boundaries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Starts settling in • Feels more comfortable • Realizes this could be his forever home • Figures out his environment • Gets into a routine • Lets his guard down; beginning to show his true personality • Behavior issues may appear 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finally feels completely comfortable in his home • Begins to build trust and a true bond • Gains a complete sense of security with his new family • Sets into a routine <p style="text-align: right; font-size: small;">CatBehaviorSolutions.org</p>

How to Introduce Cats to Cats

Phase 1 – Cat Smells Cat

Successful introductions take time. DO NOT and we repeat DO NOT try to introduce the new addition to your resident cat(s) immediately upon arrival. You may damage the new relationship irreparably and initiate fear, anger, aggression, spraying and litter box problems in the new cat and/or resident cat(s). Successful introductions take time.

Let the cats sniff out the situation. Let “smell” be the first introduction as the cats sniff each other from under the “safe room” door. Within two to four days, begin exchanging the bedding between the new and resident cat(s) daily. This helps familiarize the cats with each other’s scents.

Phase 2 – Cat Continues to Smell Cat

Let the sniffing continue. If there are no marked signs of aggression from the cats, such as hissing and growling, the next step is to confine your resident cat to a room and let the new cat explore your house for a couple of hours each day for several days.

Phase 3 – Cat Sees Cat

Organize a carrier meeting. Place your new cat in a carrier and put the carrier in a location of your home outside of the safe room (for example, the living room). Allow the cats to look at each other and sniff through the carrier door.

Any signs of aggression? Keep the visit short and return the new cat to its safe room.

Repeat this phase 2 to 3 times daily (if possible), until cats appear to be more comfortable with each other.

Phase 4 – Cat Meets Cat

Let the cats meet at their own pace. If there are no signs of aggression between cats, leave the door to the safe room open a crack. This will allow the new cat to explore and/or your resident cat to visit. Supervision is necessary for the safety of both cats.

In case of aggression, have a spray bottle filled with water or a towel handy. Always stop serious threats and/or aggression immediately, as a serious fight may damage the potential for successful integration and relationship.

A Feliway diffuser may also prove helpful when integration is difficult.

Phase 5 – Integration Complete

You may notice some occasional hissing, swatting and grouchy behaviour over the next few months (and years). This is normal. Cats are hierarchical by nature and must establish and affirm the pecking order within your household. Plus, much like humans, all cats have the occasional “off” day.

Please note: The 5 phases detailed above offer only approximate timelines. Some integrations may proceed faster or slower and integration is dependent on the personalities of the cats involved. Remember, you know your cat(s) best. Use common sense and patience when integrating a new cat or cats.

How to Introduce Cats to Dogs

Phase 1 – Cat Smells Dog

Follow the steps detailed in Phase 1 of the How to Introduce Cats to Cats section above.

Phase 2 – Switch Spots

If there are no other cats in your home, confine the dog to one room and let the cat begin to explore the rest of your house for one to two hours each day until the cat is familiar and comfortable with the layout of your home.

Phase 3 – Cat Meets Dog

Bring the dog in on a leash. Once the cat is used to your home, let the cat roam loose in one room. Keep the dog on a leash and have dog treats ready in your pocket. If possible, have another person the cat is familiar with on the other side of the room to reassure and distract the cat from the dog.

Sit and meet. Keep the dog seated and focused on you as the leader. Try offering the dog a toy. If the dog focuses on or accepts the toy, reward the dog with a treat. If the dog tries to stand and move towards the cat(s), correct the dog slightly with the leash and reward him or her with a treat. If at any point the dog is not responding to your commands or the cat's stress level appears elevated, remove the dog from the room. Keep repeating this process until the dog is responding to you and either ignoring or accepting the cat(s). This process helps teach the dog that cats are not prey, toys to be chased, or threats.

Watch. Never leave the dog and cat(s) unsupervised until you are absolutely sure they have built up a mutual, trusting and respectful relationship.

Make sure kitty has some space for alone time. Even once the cat(s) and dog(s) are comfortable with each other, cats still like having the option to retreat to a space away from the dog

Note: The length of time required to successfully integrate cats with dogs varies depending on the previous experiences of the animals involved. For example, your dog may have had previous encounter with a cat or the cat may have had prior experience with a dog. Often, when the cats and dogs are used to being around the other species, integration can be quicker.

