

K.C. CAT CLINIC
7101 Main Street
Kansas City, MO 64114
Phone (816) 361-4888
kccatclinic.com

INTRODUCING NEW CATS INTO THE HOUSEHOLD

One of the hardest behavior problems to deal with is inter-cat aggression. In order to try to avoid trouble, you should introduce a new cat into your household with care. The biggest mistake that people make is forcing cats on one another right off the bat. If you push a strange cat at your cat you are likely to get an aggressive response. That's the way that they are made. They don't like to meet other cats and play. They approach each other cautiously, establishing their social position with confrontation. Intercat aggression may result in fighting, stalking, inappropriate litter pan behavior, and in general just making one cat's life miserable. The following suggestions may help avoid adjustment problems when you bring home your new pet.

Regardless of the age of the cat being introduced, isolation is the first step to introduction. You want the new cat to lose the scent of where it has been and pick up the scent of its new home before the resident cats get a chance to get a whiff of it. The isolation should be as complete as possible. No sticking paws at each other under the door or hissing through the cracks. Ideally you want to keep the isolation up for 5-7 days.

When you're ready to bring the cats together, start with a large distance between them. Have one person handle a cat at one end of your largest room and another person with a cat at the other. Do pleasant, non-threatening things with the cats while they are allowed to eye each other. Feed them something yummy, or comb or brush them if that's what they like. We want them to see each other and not have any aggressive behavior or posturing. Every encounter that they have where they stay calm and not angry encourages them to act like that the next time they meet. If they do well for a short time at a great distance, the next day decrease the distance by a foot or two and increase the time they have to check each other out. The first day start 10 feet apart for 5 minutes, the next day 8 feet apart for 10 minutes and so forth. If they start being aggressive, back off and start again. If several days go by and you feel like they are tolerating each other, let them explore the room and find each other at their own speed. There will be some degree of posturing between them in order to figure out who's who. We want them to be able to be in the same room or on the same piece of furniture without fighting. Our realistic expectations are for them to tolerate each other. If we're lucky, it may turn out that they really like each other.

Some cats are not going to accept new cats into the household. Sometimes we can use medication to make them less anxious and relieve some of the problems. Sometimes we can advise other behavior modification techniques to take the stress off. If you feel like there are problems, don't wait too long to talk to us about it. The longer it goes on, the harder it is to get straightened out. Let us know if we can be of help.