

BEHAVIOR

Introducing a New Cat to Your Cat, Step by Step

A slow introduction prevents most fights. Separate rooms, scent swapping, then short supervised visits over two to four weeks.

By Catt County Cat Nippers • Reviewed October 15, 2026 • 1 min read • 2 cited sources

Need help with spay/neuter costs in Cattaraugus County? Apply at cattcountycatnippers.org/apply or call or text (716) 200-1283. Support this work at cattcountycatnippers.org.

Before the new cat comes home

Have the new cat checked by a veterinarian and tested for contagious diseases before it meets your other cats.

The steps

1. Separate room: give the new cat its own room with food, water, a litter box, bedding and places to hide.
2. Scent swap: after a few days, swap bedding between the cats, and let each explore the other's space while the other is shut away.
3. Feed on either side of the closed door, moving bowls closer as both stay calm.
4. Visual contact: open the door a crack or use a baby gate or screen for short sessions.
5. Supervised time together: short visits with play and treats, ending before anyone gets stressed.

Go slower if you see stress

Hissing, growling, swatting or constant hiding mean the cats need more time. Go back a step. Most introductions take two to four weeks, some longer.

Make sure each cat has its own food, water, litter box and resting spots, so they never have to compete.

Sources

1. Feline Veterinary Medical Association — Step-by-Step Guide: Introducing a New Cat (PDF)

<https://catvets.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Step-by-Step-Guide-How-to-Introduce-a-New-Cat-to-Other-Cats-in-Your-Home.pdf>

2. UC Davis Veterinary Medicine — Introducing Your New Cat to Your Other Household Cats

<https://healthtopics.vetmed.ucdavis.edu/health-topics/feline/introducing-your-new-cat-your-other-household-cats>