

## Introducing a New Cat to a Resident Dog

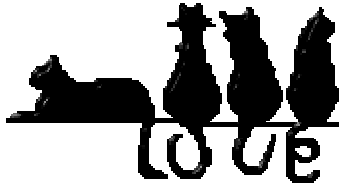
Dogs and cats who have not experienced each other will require some extra time to become accustomed to each other. Dogs usually want to chase and play with cats, and cats are usually afraid and defensive. You can use any of the techniques described in "Introducing a new cat to other cats." If your dog does not already know the commands "sit," "down," "come," and "stay," you should begin working on them. Little tidbits of food increase your dog's motivation to perform, which will be necessary in the presence of such a strong distraction as a new cat.

Begin as described in Introducing a New Cat to a Resident Cat article. Take the time to go through the steps.

1. Once the cat is comfortable in the house and has been introduced to the smells of the dog, you can attempt a face to face introduction in a controlled manner. Put your dog's leash on, and command him to either "sit" or "down" and "stay,". Have another family member enter the room and quietly sit down with the cat on his or her lap. At first, the cat and dog should be on opposite sides of the room. Praise both and give treats. Repeat this step several times until both the cat and dog are tolerating each other without fear, aggression, or other uncontrollable behavior.
2. Next, move the animals a little closer together, with the dog still on a leash and the cat gently held in a lap. If the cat does not like to be held, you can use a wire crate or carrier instead. If the dog gets up from its "stay" position, it should be firmly repositioned, and praised and rewarded for obeying the "stay" command. If the cat becomes frightened, increase the distance between the animals and progress more slowly. Providing the cat with a cat tree or high place to be above the dog will help her feel more confident.
3. Try to direct each session so the dog is likely to do the right thing and get praise. Although your dog must be taught that chasing or being rough with the cat is unacceptable behavior, if your dog is always punished whenever the cat is around, and never has "good things" happen in the cat's presence, your dog may associate the cat with unpleasant reprimands.
4. You may want to keep your dog on a leash and with you when the cat is free in the house during the introduction process. Be sure that your cat has an escape route, and a place to hide. Keep the dog and cat separated when you aren't home until you are certain they will both be safe.

**Precautions:** Dogs like to eat cat food because it is very high in protein, and therefore very tasty, but it's not good for them. Keep cat food out of the dog's reach (in a closet, on a high shelf, etc.). Likewise, cats should not eat dog food exclusively as it may cause dietary deficiencies.

Dogs like to eat cat feces, and although there are no real health hazards to the dog from this habit except possibly increased vomiting, it is usually distasteful to the owners and disruptive to the cat's use of the box. The best solution is to place the litter box where the dog cannot access it such as behind a baby gate, install an interior cat door to a laundry room, or build/purchase a litterbox bench (like a toybox with cat-sized hole) to contain the litterbox.



## **FIV Positive Cats**

FIV positive cats can have a difficult time finding homes, even though in all respects they are normal, loving cats. Please don't allow the FIV stigma to prevent you from opening your heart and home to a wonderful kitty companion.

FIV stands for Feline Immunodeficiency Virus. It's a lentivirus, meaning that it progresses very slowly, gradually affecting a cat's immune system. The virus weakens the cat's defense against disease but does not eliminate it altogether. Cats that test positive for Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV) can live long and healthy lives, sometimes with no symptoms at all.

Here are some facts about FIV:

1. The Feline Immuno-deficiency Virus is a slow virus that affects a cat's immune system over a period of years.
2. The virus can be spread through blood transfusions, badly infected gums, or serious, penetrating bite wounds.
3. FIV is a cat-only disease and cannot be spread to humans or other non-felines.
4. FIV is cannot be spread casually - like in litter boxes, water and food bowls, or when snuggling and playing.
5. FIV cats most often live long, healthy, and relatively normal lives with no symptoms at all.

In order for a FIV cat to live a long and healthy life, it is important to keep the cat's immune system strong. Here are some general rules for protecting FIV positive cats from disease.

1. They need to live in a household as the only cat, or with other FIV positive cats.
2. They need to be kept indoors to avoid non-FIV, healthy cats that are often carriers of disease germs that their immune system prevents from turning into a full-blown infection. The FIV positive may get infected and become ill.
3. They must be free of external and internal parasites as they weaken the body by taking away vital nutrients and may also harbor disease.
4. They are not to eat uncooked meat or fish. Raw meat may contain parasites and potentially harmful germs.
5. They must be fed a high-quality healthy diet to assist the cat's immune system to function better.
6. Treat any secondary problems as soon as they arise. Regular vet checkups are recommended.
7. Give him or her plenty of love and attention.

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## Cat-Proofing Your Home

Cats are curious by nature, and they love to climb and jump on top of high places. When your cat is getting used to her new surroundings, she will be doing a lot of investigating and exploring. You need to make sure your home is safe and secure - follow these guidelines and check off items as you proceed through your home;

**1. Check all windows and screens to make sure they are very strong.** Cats can push weak or torn screens out from the frame or tear them. Cats can escape even from second or third story (or higher!) windows and may injure themselves in the process. It is best to install new steel screens, or place metal grilles such as the ones available for screen doors over windows you wish to keep open. If in doubt, keep the window closed at night and while you are away.

**2. If you have a balcony, don't let the cat out there.** Cats often try to leap onto railings or after birds and may fall. Balconies are not safe places for cats.

**3. Remove plants that may be poisonous.** Cats love to chew plants, and some cats may use potted plants as a litter box, so try to hang all plants out of reach or move them outside. If you are not sure if your plants are poisonous to cats, ask your vet. Common plants that are poisonous include; philodendrons, ferns, all lilies, and poinsettias. One taste of a lily can kill a cat.

**4. Lock up all cleaning supplies, drain openers, medications, and other poisonous substances.** Place them in a sealable plastic container with a latched lid. Make sure antifreeze is not accessible and do not allow your cat in your garage where leaked fluids can poison her. Animals are attracted to the sweet taste of antifreeze and other toxic substances.

**5. Check for pest poisons and remove them.** Rat poison, ant and roach poison and rodent traps are all dangerous to cats. If you rent your home or recently moved in, do a thorough check for existing poisons, sometimes they are left behind by previous tenants. Check the back of all cupboards, drawers, closets, etc. Cats can become sick or die from eating the poison or from rats or insects that have ingested the poison.

**6. Remove dangling cords such as the strings from blinds and phone cords.** Cats can't resist playing with these items and can become entangled and hang or choke. Tie up cords from blinds near the top of the window, and secure loose power cords and cables with ties out of reach or behind furniture. Some cats may also chew electrical cords and could be electrocuted – make sure your cords are tucked away.

7. **Put away breakable items**, especially on bookshelves and countertops where cats may investigate. Make sure shelves and furniture are stable and won't tip over.

8. **Pick up any small, swallowable items and strings.** Rubber bands, paper clips, string, thumb tacks, broken balloons, tree tinsel and other small articles are tempting play objects for cats, but pose a choking hazard. String can cut the intestines if swallowed. *Important:* if your cat ever swallows string, NEVER pull the string out from either end – you can cause internal damage. Call your vet immediately.

9. **Set aside a "safe room" for your new arrival.** Put her food dish, water, litter box, toys, scratching post and bed in it. Give this room a thorough going over. Once kitty is comfortable in her new surroundings, it will be time to let her explore the rest of your happily cat-proofed home.

10. **EXTRA CAUTION WITH KITTENS.** Kittens will get into very small places, always be sure to check on them before starting appliances, moving anything or sitting in a chair. Kittens have been injured or killed in clothes driers, reclining chairs, dresser drawers, and many other places you'd never imagine. So be safe – always know where your kitten is!

# Bringing Your Cat Home

## The First Day Home

Your new cat has just spent some time living in a cage or foster home, awaiting adoption. She may not be used to large, open or strange spaces and may become scared or overwhelmed if released into large apartment or entire house on her own. Therefore, it is best to keep her confined one room or a small area to start with.

When you arrive home with your new pet:

- Bring the carrier into the *safe room* and close the door behind you
- Keep other pets out of the room for at least a few days
- Place the carrier in a private, quiet corner and leave it closed
- Set out food and water, fill the litter box with litter if you haven't already done so (you may later move them gradually to other areas of the house when your cat is given access to the rest of the house)
- Open the carrier door, and then remain nearby quietly to see if she will emerge. Don't force her to come out, let her come out on her own time. Some cats may not come out until night time.
- If she does not want to come out right away, make sure the food and water dishes are nearby, as is the litter box.

## The Next Few Days

Hiding - As a rule, cats are very upset by changes in their environment. Some cats will adjust more quickly, while others may take weeks or months. You must have the patience and understanding to allow your cat to adjust at her own pace. When you first bring her home, your cat is likely to hide – this is why you need to provide a safe, comfortable place for her to retreat to. Ideally, the hiding place can still be reached. Kitty cubes – the quilted cubes with 2 entrances – work great as retreats for your new pet. Try to block off places like under the bed where she can hide completely and be out of reach.

Bonding - Spend as much time in the room with her as you can, even if you are working or doing something else. The more time you spend with your new cat, the faster and stronger the bond will form. If she does not want to be picked up, try brushing her or playing with a toy. Being picked up is a very intimidating process for a cat, and many who are very friendly and cuddly still object to the process. Place a chair in the room and try sitting and inviting the cat onto your lap instead of picking her up. Or, sit on the floor on her level. Some cats may come close to you if you sit on a bed. Offer treats such as deli meats from your hand.

Other Pets - Other pets may be introduced gradually if your cat seems to be confident and not too timid. You should keep your new cat enclosed in the crate or carrier while introducing the other pets gradually. Do not leave the pets

together unsupervised until they have had several weeks of SUPERVISED interaction. This is especially important with dogs – even friendly ones. A chase scene will make future interactions much more difficult. Do not introduce kittens under 4 months to a dog unless your dog has prior kitten experience. Even dogs used to cats may not recognize a kitten as part of the family unless introduced properly.

### **The Rest of the House**

Some cats are by nature more bold and adventurous than others. Some of our cats have been abandoned and/or neglected before they were rescued. That experience tends to make them less confident of unknown situations. When she feels at home in her own space, has explored the room thoroughly and does not hide in her “house” all the time, then you can try giving her access to the rest of the house. Continue keeping her food, water and litter where they are presently located. Later you can move them gradually to the desired location. Even if your cat has decided she wants to explore, she may still be easily frightened by sudden noises or too much open space. Keep your cat’s own space set up exactly as it has been, so she has a refuge that is familiar to her. This feeling of familiarity is very important to cats. Try to confine her to the original room at night and when you are absent, so that she doesn’t run into any trouble – especially if you have other pets.

Now, you must be very careful to avoid letting your cat escape outdoors. Your adoption contract specified that the cat will be kept indoors at all times, unless a special exception was made. This is especially crucial during the first 6 months. If your cat escapes during this adjustment period you may never see her again! Once outside, a cat in a new home often panics and starts to run blindly, in danger of being hit by a car and getting lost. To avoid this occurrence, be vigilant about opening and closing outside doors quickly. This may be difficult if children are present, so speak to them about the importance of this matter. Also, if your house has a vestibule or double door, try to use this entrance so the inner door is closed before the outer one opens and vice versa.

## Adopt an Adult Cat

What you see is what you get. When you adopt an adult cat, you know what you are getting. Sure, kittens are cute, but you never know what the future holds. An adorable kitten could grow up to be a really ugly puss. This is a big risk. Go for the sure thing. Take a sweet-faced old Tabby.

High mileage cats still run great. Used cats aren't like used cars. They aren't at a shelter because they are defective or worn out. They may have simply outlived their former owners or been unable to join them at a hospital, nursing home, or new apartment. Some cats get lost and end up at a shelter. And many are brought to a shelter after a family member develops allergies, or an aversion to the family cat. (In those cases, it is the previous owner that is defective, not the cat.)

1. Adult cats aren't as "chewsy". Kittens are like human children: everything goes in their mouths. Whether teething or just exploring bits of the world around them, kittens can be very destructive little bundles of fur. Kittens chew on shoes, the corners of books, ear lobes, carpet tassels, electrical cords, drapery strings, plants, and much, much more. Adult cats typically chew less, if at all. They tend to save their energy for more important activities, like tormenting the neighbour's Terrier.
2. Kittens stumble in blindly, where adult cats fear to tread. Two well-known clichés about cats are: "curiosity killed the cat" and "cats have nine lives." And curiosity usually leads to the loss of about eight of a kitten's lives in its first year. Kittens tend to get into much more trouble resulting in accidents and injuries (see, for example, the reference to "chewing electrical cords" above). Kittens eat things they shouldn't, fall from high places, unsuccessfully attempt to make friends with the neighbor's tormented Terrier, and generally worry you half to death.
3. Kittens are lacking when it comes to licking. Few kittens have mastered the fine art of self-grooming. While adult cats may spend up to half their waking hours licking fur, kittens are just too busy enjoying life to clean themselves properly. When you consider that kittens are really just dust-mops with legs, and that they generally display marginal litter box etiquette, you might want to master the somewhat dangerous art of cat-bathing.
4. Einstein knew the truth about cats. The genius scientist Albert Einstein discovered an important relationship between mass and energy. He described it using the mathematical equation  $E=(MC)^2$ . This equation means that your Energy level (E) is proportional to the Mass (M) of your Cat<sup>©</sup>, twice over. The equation basically shows that if you adopt a cat with more Mass, like an adult cat, your Energy level will be much higher than if you adopt a cat with a low Mass, such as a kitten. This is true because adult cats sleep more, play less, require less supervision, break fewer lamps, and don't try to bite your toes through

the blankets in the middle of the night. With an adult cat, you will sleep better, relax more, make fewer claims on your homeowner's policy, and enjoy more Energy. There you have it. Are you going to argue with Albert Einstein?

5. Kittens and children don't mix. Children can be rough on both cats and kittens, even when they mean no real harm. It can't be helped. It's just how kids are. When you tell a child that "cats always land on their feet," the first thing the child will do is drop one from your rooftop to see if it's true. Adult cats are better equipped to deal with pesky kids. They can generally escape from them, hide, and then contemplate revenge by moonlight.
6. You don't need to teach an old cat new tricks. Actually, you don't need to teach a kitten tricks either, because the truth is that neither cats nor kittens allow you to teach them anything anyway. But new parents usually feel the need to try. Inevitably, they end up feeling guilt or failure when the kitten disregards them, jumps on the counters, unrolls the toilet paper, and engages in other acts of feline mayhem. If you adopt an older cat, you avoid all this emotional turmoil. Since you didn't raise the cat, you don't have to take responsibility for the cat's shortcomings. Instead, you can blame the former owner and play the role of victim and saint for tolerating it all.
7. Adult cats don't "litter" as much. Kittens play, sunbathe, build sandcastles, and even sleep in their litter boxes. And then there's a game called "poo-hockey," where a piece of dried waste is removed from the box and batted around the floor until it disappears under a major appliance or piece of furniture. People who adopt older cats happily miss this stage of feline development. Adult cats understand the purpose of a litter box and will usually cooperate with your efforts to keep theirs tidy. But the most important reason to adopt an older cat is:
8. It might be their last chance. Many adult cats end up in shelters due to no fault of their own. Separated from their loved ones, surrounded by other strange cats, confined, confused, and sometimes frightened, many are emotionally devastated by their misfortune. Sadly for adult cats, most people who adopt gravitate toward the adorable, bouncy, big-eyed kittens. Older cats sit by and watch, as one loving family after another passes them over for a cute kitten from this season's litter.

Kittens will always be popular, and most have no trouble attracting admirers. But for the abandoned, forgotten, and heartbroken adult cats, you just might be their last chance to have the love and warmth of a home where they can live out their years in comfort. Please consider adopting an older cat. When cared for properly, cats can live well into their late teens, and sometimes into their early twenties. Typically, they will remain active and playful throughout most of their lives. Some may need a little extra patience while adjusting to a new home, but once they feel safe and secure again, most will give you years of faithful companionship and unconditional love.