

## Introductions

### Making feline friendships as painless as possible

Cats really prefer things to stay the same, and they are usually very unsubtle about indicating their displeasure. Introducing a new anything--from another pet, to another human to even new furniture--is a source of anxiety for the cat and the owner, so these are some strategies to help reduce the disruptions.

#### Introducing yourself--the easiest one.

This is achieved when your cat selects you, and you can be pretty sure it will be love at first sight. Your new feline friend will quickly train you to their unique requirements, and most owners do not present any obstacles. (In fact, it amazes me what owners will put up with from their cats--their feline dictator's training methods are obviously very effective!) Remember, no cat ever changes--all you can do is change the environment so the cat no longer shows the undesirable behaviour (this goes for spraying, scratching--posts and people, roaming, food fetishists, etc.) Make your rules at the start, and be consistent. Cats are smart (smart enough to need antidepressants!), but they have no way of associating something they did more than HALF A SECOND AGO with any kind of punishment. In fact, PUNISHMENT NEVER WORKS WITH CATS, all the Feline Stars of T.V. perform of their own free will, and it is the cameramen who make it look easy and directed!



#### Introducing another person

The main concept here is to let the cat make the first approach. This is important when bringing a cat into a new home or bringing a new person into the cat's home. They have to get the measure of the person, and they do that by smell, watching and listening. Remember that when a cat walks into a room, it knows (by smell especially) who is already there, who was there half an hour ago, and who is coming down the hall now. It is a lot of information to process, and if you rush it, you can unnerve the cat. Give the cat a chance to 'take it or

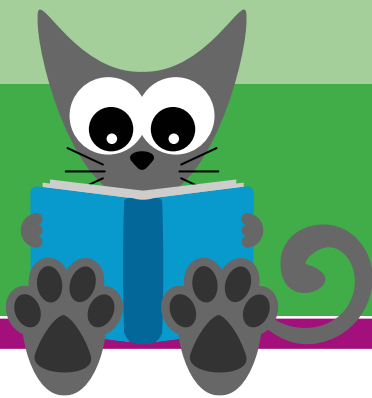
leave it' and never look straight into a cat's eyes--it is a very confrontational thing to do in cat language. Wait, with your head to the side and look past the cat with half closed eyes. They will come just out of curiosity then!

#### Introducing a baby (or toddler)

Cats view babies and toddlers as different species to adult humans. Remarkable perception really, though a bit confusing now that cats are living longer and can see them grow up! Cats will usually tolerate significantly more in the way of sticky fingers and uncoordinated proddings from a young human, and as long as they have an escape route they will use that in preference!

The key to managing the return of a new baby to the household, is to understand that the biggest concern for your cat is the changes in routine and smells. It is essential to manage the cat's natural curiosity, while protecting the baby and the cat from each other's unexpected actions. Cats don't smother babies (that was the traditional explanation for SIDS deaths), and they get into the cots because it is SOFT, WARM AND HIGH UP!

You have to decide BEFORE the baby comes home whether or not your feline friend will be allowed into the baby's bedroom. If not, then the time to install the screen door and start preventing access is NOW. Cats will learn not to go into rooms if they are NEVER allowed in there - they do not understand 'sometimes you can and sometimes you can't'. If you are going to allow access to the nursery, then if you can provide a shelf with a view of what is going on nearby, your cat will probably be happier to sit there, as they are not big on the way babies move around in bed anyway, and they can take on a supervisory role!



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It is a good idea to install the shelf and get your cat used to it before the baby arrives and everyone is pushed for time and energy. Many cats will keep their distance from babies and toddlers, but some cats really blossom with the arrival of the new baby, especially as it means someone is at home with them more! However, try to establish a routine that the cat can count on with feeding and playtimes for them as well, and always ensure they have an escape route to lessen their anxiety should the small human become too boisterous.

#### Introducing another cat

Cats really don't like other cats most of the time, so THIS

**CAN BE HARD!** A great deal depends on whether the resident cat/s have ever had a friendship with another cat, and depends on the age of both the resident and the new arrival. If the newcomer is a KITTEN, then isolating it in one room with its food, litter tray and toys for a few days (till the resident cat becomes Curious rather than Furious) works well. 'Toweling' the resident, then the newcomer, then the resident again mingles the smells and makes the new cat less 'strange'. Once you open the door between them, **DO NOT INTERRUPT THE HISSING AND SPITTING THAT IS BOUND TO HAPPEN.** You can cause confusion, and cats can't apologise, so it will then take much longer for them to figure out an amicable arrangement. Young cats (less than 6 months) will usually bond quickly and permanently, older cats take longer and may take up to six months to sort out their 'timeshare' arrangements around the cozy spots of the house. It is rare for these



confrontations to become lethal, or even lead to a severe enough fight to cause damage. You can use the Feliway Diffuser here to make the room where they meet more 'emotionally cozy' and reduce anxiety, but the cats will have to have a 'discussion' and speak their mind as well.

#### Introducing a dog

Dogs are really no challenge to a cat - as long as they can escape if they have to. The cat will always just 'go high' and then view the dog with disdain if it prefers not to be in canine company. The trick about the introduction is to prevent the DOG's hunting instinct from creating a

CATastrophe by chasing the cat - sometimes out onto the road or other dangerous places. So, put the dog on a lead and let the cat investigate. You are in control then and can disrupt any problems. Once the cat is aware of the fact that the dog is allowed to live in the same house or yard, then in general, it will control the meetings. The dog may get a few biffs on the nose, but rarely any major damage unless it manages to bail the cat into a corner. Then it will have to learn the cat rules painfully. Many cats learn to adore dogs (they are, after all, mobile warm cushions!), especially they are introduced when the kitten is young enough to

accept it as a friend!

Some cats, like some people, love everybody they meet, and will tolerate all kinds of change. However, as it is for most of us, First Impressions Do Count, and done thoughtfully and respectfully, can reduce conflict. How closely feline lives reflect our own!