

## **Bringing a New Cat Home**

Welcoming a cat into a household that already has a cat can be tricky. Cats can be highly territorial and are not always willing to accept change. For these reasons, it is important to take things slowly. Start by putting the newcomer in a room by herself for a week. This allows the new pet to get used to her new surroundings a little at a time. It also helps the resident feline to gradually accept her presence. The room should be comfortable (litter, food, toys, a bed). Be sure to spend time with the cat every day and ascertain that she is adjusting well.

After four days, put your first cat in the newcomer's room, and allow the new pet to explore other areas of the home. Exploring each other's territories lets them do research on each other before their first meeting. This should last for about a half an hour. Do this again for the next two days. Most cats will be more than ready to meet after this separation. However, there are exceptions. If, at the end of the week, the cats are still sitting by the closed door and growling and hissing frequently, a few more days may be needed. Use your instinct. If you believe the cats are not ready, they probably aren't.

Assuming all looks good, open the door. Don't force a meeting; allow the cats to come and go as they please. It may help matters to offer both felines a special cat treat immediately. How can they not get along when each brings the other delicious treats? Hissing, swatting, even a little growling are normal and should not be cause for much concern. Let the cats work things out themselves. But be prepared to intervene if there is a fight. Lunging, crying, and flying fur are not good signs!

At this point, use your best judgment on whether to continue to separate the cats. Ordinarily, it is a good idea to do so when you are away or cannot watch the cats closely. It is not unheard of for cats to be seen curled up with each other within minutes of meeting, though. If this happens to you, give yourself a pat on the back for a job well done!