



Guide to Meeting a Resident Cat

During the first couple of days any handling should, ideally, take place when the kitten initiates it. Initial handling should comprise gentle stroking on the head and face area and can be extended to gentle stroking down the back. If the kitten is comfortable with this, you can gently pick up your kitten to get it used to being held.

Scent is very important to cats. For your cats, your house will have a certain smell which makes it familiar. It will consist of the resident cat(s) scent, left by rubbing its face and body on walls and furniture, along with the normal household smells. Although you are unlikely to see the scent markings; your cat's scent is everywhere. Initially, introducing the kitten by smell only may help resident cat(s) investigate the kitten without encountering it, and is a gentle start to the introductions. To mix the new kitten's scent into this communal smell, swap bedding between the kitten and resident cat(s) — this should only be carried out once the kitten is fully adjusted to his/her new home. In addition, if the kitten enjoys being stroked, use a small soft cloth, a soft cotton glove or your hand, and gently stroke or rub around the kitten's head and the rest of its body, and then rub this onto the furniture at cat height. This leaves 'kitten scent' around for the resident cat(s) to encounter as it moves around.

The first meeting:

- The door to the kitten's room should remain closed initially, allowing the kitten to exercise within that space without encountering your other cat.
- Exchange scents (as above) for about a week, if possible, before letting them see each other. Then, let each explore the others' space, when they are not present.
- The first few meetings should not involve approach of, or contact with, each other. If you have a glass or mesh door or can set up a barrier with baby gates and mesh so that the cats can see each other, but not yet interact, this will help introductions too. Initially, this should be partially covered, with something like a blanket.

- When you first have the kitten and resident cat in the same room keep everything quiet and relaxed. Reward calm behaviour.
- Have one person supervising each cat, in a low-key way, and ready to gently and positively intervene before a problem occurs.

As long as each cat is calm and happy, initially allow them to sniff and interact and get used to one another for very brief periods, before distracting them away with a toy or food or attention that they enjoy. Kittens are very curious about other cats and will try to interact; it is the older cat which may be more likely to be wary or even upset. Never force interactions, and reward calm reactions. Allow the resident cat to move away if it wishes to. Watch for the slightest sign of tension, and gently remove the kitten before any upset.

- The cats may choose to stay away from or ignore each other – this is fine. There is no rush, and introductions should be a ‘non-event’. It may take some time to accept a new cat in the house. As long as there is no sign of upset or distress, or antagonism, they may learn to accept each other over time.
- Kittens like to hide under furniture or in small places. Make sure there are things in the room which the kitten can get into or under safely, which the larger cat cannot access. Resident cat(s) should also have room to avoid or be inaccessible to the kitten.
- In some introductions the kitten may be accepted fairly quickly, in others it may take weeks or months before the resident cat feels relaxed with the kitten around — all cats are different. All interactions between adult and kitten should still be closely supervised
- The kitten and existing cat(s) should never be forced to interact/be in close proximity to one another, nor should they be fed in the same locations (cats are naturally solitary feeders), as this may lead to conflict between them and potentially negatively affect their relationship. Both kitten and adult, should always be provided with ample resources of their own (bed, litter tray, food bowls, water bowls, etc) positioned in separate locations.
- The energy and enthusiasm kittens have for play can often outweigh that of adult cats. In order to prevent your kitten annoying your resident cat(s), ensure your kitten has ample opportunity for social and independent play. Watch carefully for any play behaviour from your kitten that appears to be unwanted by your resident cats. If this happens, calmly redirect the kitten onto more appropriate outlets, such as toys, before the resident cat gets upset.