Introducing Cats: Steps to Create a Friendship

1: Prepare a Space for the New Cat.

Set up a bathroom, large closet, or spare bedroom for your new cat to start in. The room should be quiet but somewhere the entire family can access. Food, water, litter, toys and a bed should all be in this space. If possible, place both feed bowls close to the door. This is a great way for the cats to form positive associations with one other.

2: Allow Scent Introductions.

Exchanging scents is an important step in the introduction process. Doing this before meeting face-to-face can help reduce stress of the initial meeting. Take a towel or blanket from your cat’s space and place it in with the new cat, and vice versa.

3: Have the Cats Swap Places.

If both cats are eating well and appear relaxed, try making a larger scent exchange. Only exchange the cats themselves - leave their things.

While the new cat is exploring your home, close bedroom and bathroom doors so he/she has limited access. You can slowly open more spaces over a larger amount of time.

4: Allow Visual Contact.

If both cats are relaxed, eating, drinking and using the litter box as normal, you are doing great! Now open the door separating the two cats, but have a gate blocking so they can only see/smell one another.

A baby gate typically works well, but you may want to stack two on top of one another.

5: Let them Meet!

If both cats are relaxed, eating, drinking and using the litter box as normal, then it is time to take down the gates. There may be some hissing or swatting, but cats often will work things out by themselves. If the cats seem to tolerate, ignore, enjoy or interact with each other – that is great news!

6: When to Leave Them Alone Together.

It is a good idea to separate the cats at first when you will not be around to supervise them. You want to ensure that you see all their interactions and know exactly what is going on. After you feel that the cats are getting along, you can ease up on this step.