



Paw Prints

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Columnist

Cats with other cats

You recently began a new job outside the home and have been concerned that your cat might be lonely. She's such an easy-going cat since you raised her from a kitten two years ago, and you think she would enjoy the company of another feline.

Throwing two cats into one environment without careful consideration of their situation is just asking for trouble. A botched or hurried introduction can set the cats up to become bitter enemies. With the right introduction, cats can ease into accepting one another and may just become lifelong pals.

Since cats are social animals and not solitary creatures as was once thought,

there are benefits to having two cats — as long as they are well matched. One benefit is that the two felines provide each other with exercise and social interaction.

They are also territorial, so the introduction process requires some finesse and patience. Both cats need to feel secure. From your resident kitty's perspective, there's an intruder in her territory. From the newcomer's view, she has just been dropped on hostile ground.

All cats are different, and some are more social than others. For instance: An 8-year-old cat who has never been around other animals might not learn to share her territory (and her pet parent) with other pets. But an 8-week-old kitten separated from her mom and littermates for the first time might be glad to have any companion. These differences should be considered when making a match. Kittens, adolescents, and young adults can usually get along by satisfying each other's need to play. Another suitable match would be pairing a kitten or adolescent with an adult female that has been around other cats, so the female can take on a "motherly" role.

Both cats will need a safe

place away from each other in the beginning of this big life-changing event.

Kitty already has her established territory, so the new cat's temporary quarters can be a spare bedroom or bathroom with her litter box, food, water, scratching post, toys and a bed for up to a week. Think about including a large open carrier or crate, so she has a hiding place if she feels stressed while acclimating to her new environment.

After spending time with your new cat, close the door behind you and visit with your resident feline. Kitty will smell the newbie on you. She will also sense her through the door. Give Kitty tantalizing treats so she makes a positive connection to the new cat. Then spend quality time with the new feline, rewarding her with goodies, too.

Feed Kitty and the newbie on each side of the door to the room where your new cat's temporary living quarters are so that they associate something enjoyable (eating) with each other's smells. However, don't put food so close to the door that the animals are too upset by each other's presence to eat.

Gradually move the dishes closer to the door until both pets can eat



PHOTO BY JODI SCHNEIDER MCNAMEE

Nonolo, a kitten that does well with an older cat that has been around other cats.

calmly while sitting directly on either side of the door.

Next, you can try to get both cats to interact with a toy — while on opposite side of the door. Tie a toy, such as a furry mouse or feather, to each end of a string, then place it on either side of the door. Hopefully, they'll start batting the toys around.

To animals, smells are far more important than appearances, so you want to get your cats used to each other's scent before they meet face-to-face.

Once your new cat is using her litter box and eating regularly while confined,

let her have free time in the house while confining Kitty to the new cat's room.

Sound crazy?

Think of it this way: It's better to introduce your pets to each other gradually so that neither animal becomes afraid or aggressive. Even then, when the cats are face-to-face, there will still be some kinks for them to work out.

Realize that multiple cats are not likely to be best buddies immediately. There are no guarantees, and it's always best to be super cautious when introducing cats to each other.

"I was just going in for 10 minutes."

But then the check-out line was so long.

Even with the windows partly down, the heat can rise from 80° outside to 102° inside the car in a short time.*

Parked cars are deathtraps for dogs: On a 78-degree day, the temperature inside a parked car can soar to between 100 and 120 degrees in just minutes, and on a 90-degree day, the interior temperature can reach as high as 160 degrees in less than 10 minutes. Animals can sustain brain damage or even die from heatstroke in just 15 minutes.*



Friends don't leave friends in parked cars!

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