



Paw Prints

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Columnist

Introducing a kitten to your adult cat

Spring and summer are kitten season! Yes, kittens have a season.

With spring in full swing and warmer temperatures coming, the kitten population begins to increase through mid-summer. Sadly, during this time, local shelters see a dramatic increase in kittens due to cats not being spayed or neutered.

But maybe you've had your heart set on a kitten for a while and you've been thinking of giving your resident adult cat a companion all winter. Now's the time to rescue one from the local shelter.

First thing to do is to make sure that your new kitten is healthy prior to

introducing her to your adult cat. Before bringing Kitty home, take her to your veterinarian for a complete exam. Your vet can also advise you on when would be the right time to spay or neuter your kitten.

The best way to introduce your kitten to your resident cat is *slowly*. Don't force them to interact. A gradual process of discovery and investigation is ideal.

A little bit of extra effort at the beginning can make the difference between a good or bad relationship in the future.

It's usually easier to introduce a new kitten than an adult cat because this tends to be less challenging for an adult cat. Kitten body language and movements are less threatening and they have yet to adopt the concept of territory and competing with other cats.

However, your resident cat that you've had for a while will have established territory, and introducing your kitten may not be well received.

The best way to introduce a new kitten is to create a "safe room" as a way to get her used to the smells and sounds of her new home without getting overwhelmed. The ideal safe room should have a separate

litter box, food and water bowls, a bed, scratching post, a few toys and possibly a place to hide.

Creating this safe room allows the two cats to meet each other indirectly by getting used to one another's scent through the closed door. Plus, it allows your resident cat to get used to the smells of a new kitten without feeling threatened.

You should keep your new feline friend in the safe room for 1-2 weeks. During that time, your kitten will stop smelling like the shelter and will start smelling like your home, which is also less threatening to your resident cat.

After a few days, you can try feeding the two kitties on opposite sides of the safe room door so they associate each other's presence with a positive experience.

The next step is a face-to-face meeting. You can do this a few different ways. You can put up a baby gate in the doorway of the safe room and allow your kitten and resident cat to approach each other in their own time. Or, you can place your kitten in a carrier that smells like your cat, and then bring the kitten in the closed carrier into your resident cat's area and set it down, allowing her to approach the kitten in the



PHOTO BY JODI SCHNEIDER MCNAMEE

Look at that face. Even an adult cat would welcome this kitty home.

carrier in her own time.

Patience is a virtue with this process. It is SO important not to hurry the process. Once your cats seem to be calm at the sight of each other, it is probably safe to introduce the two without barriers like the pet carrier or baby gate.

Remember to make sure they are supervised during the initial meeting. If there are any problems during this time, go back a step to allow each cat more time to view each other on opposite sides

of the baby gate or carrier.

Introducing a kitten to an adult or older cat doesn't always go as expected. Many adult cats have never been around kittens before and often can be afraid of them. Don't necessarily expect the "parenting gene" to kick in if your resident cat has not been around kittens.

Introducing a kitten to an adult cat is not always easy, but it can be rewarding if you go slow, and allow the two cats to get used to each other.

Quilt Drawing

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100% of the proceeds go to Furry Friends Foundation.

"Pets Just Wanna Have Fun" quilt was designed, appliqued, and quilted by Valerie Fercho-Tillery. The original design and incredible detail make this a spectacular quilt!

The quilt is currently on display at The Nugget office, 442 E. Main Ave. Bring your pup by for a dog cookie and have a look!

Tickets may be purchased at The Nugget office or online at our website www.furryfriendsfoundation.org.



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"Pets Just Wanna Have Fun" - by Valerie Fercho-Tillery (45.5"w x 57.5"h)