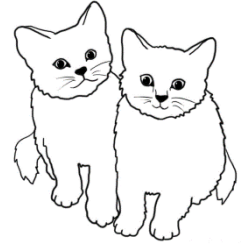




## New Cat Introductions



When Tom the Cat turned one his family decided to adopt a companion for him. They thought he would benefit from having a buddy to play with, and adopted a younger female calico named Geri from the same shelter where they adopted Tom.

Geri appeared confident enough to hold her own and was young enough to appreciate Tom's playfulness in a way that an older cat might not. And while careful selection was important, Tom's caretakers knew that a formal introduction was also in order.

### Who's There?

Change is difficult for cats, so the introduction needed to move ahead slowly. As soon as Geri was brought into the house, her new guardians set up a "guest room" for her in the spare bathroom, complete with food, water, comfy bed, litter box and toys. After releasing Geri into her temporary living quarters, they removed her carrier and left it out for Tom to investigate, serving as an introduction to the newcomer.

Tom camped outside the spare bathroom for several days. Over time he became more comfortable having her scent in his territory. Soon he was lingering in the doorway, trying to swat paws under the door and catch a glimpse of his new housemate as his guardians went in and out with fresh food or used litter.

The two-week isolation period was good for both cats. It helped Tom get used to the idea of having a housemate while Geri got used to her new home. Starting off in a small space reduced Geri's stress level, and she had her own box and bowls so sharing food or germs wasn't an issue. If she were to come down with a respiratory infection, as some feline adoptees do, she wouldn't be sneezing on Tom. Also during this two-week period, Geri had a check-up and was de-wormed.

When Geri was given a clean bill of health, it was time for phase two: both cats were given an opportunity to swap living spaces for an hour each morning and evening. Tom got to investigate Geri's quarters while she dashed around the rest of the house. This was also a good way for the cats to learn each other's scents. To build up pleasant associations when the cats were back in their respective spaces, food bowls were placed on both sides of the bathroom door.

### Hello, Gorgeous!

Things were proceeding well. Both cats ate normally and appeared playfully curious about the other. And so came the day for their first face-to-face meeting. After feeding the cats and trimming their nails, the guardians left the bathroom door ajar and busied themselves around the house. They knew it was up to Tom and Geri to take the next step. Aware that a little hissing, swatting, and chasing was to be expected, the family planned to intervene only if World War III erupted.

But thanks to their careful selection and a slow, cautious introductory period, no intervention was needed. Tom and Geri were soon playfully chasing each other around the house and napping in a shared patch of afternoon sunlight. Their well-orchestrated introduction resulted in perfect harmony.

SOURCE: Petfinder.com