

Tips for Introducing Your Kitten to a New home and Other Dogs and Cats  
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It is exciting to welcome a new kitten into your home and only natural to want to make her a part of the family as quickly as possible. In reality, it can be scary for your kitten to suddenly leave her mother and the only home she has known and be placed into new surroundings with a new family. Following are some tips on helping your kitten to feel at home and make a smooth transition into your family.

Making the necessary preparations for your kitten's daily needs before her arrival will allow you to focus more on your kitten during her first few days home. Prepare a small room for your kitten that contains a clean litter box, bed, food and water bowls and a few toys. Providing a small room such as a bathroom or laundry room for the first few days will help prevent your kitten from being overwhelmed by all the activity, noises and smells of a normal household. If possible, put a blanket or towel that your kitten slept with in her former home in the designated room before she arrives for something familiar and comforting. Keeping your kitten in her own space to start will allow her and other pets in the home to get used to the scent of one another before being formally introduced. This period will also ensure that your kitten is eating and drinking and free of health problems before she has the run of the house and is around other pets. Plan to feed your kitten the same food and use the same type of litter used in her former home for at least the first week. Once she is comfortable in her new surroundings, you can gradually switch her to a new diet if desired.

Once home, let your kitten come out of her carrier into her temporary living area on her own. Leave the carrier in the room for a familiar place to go for comfort. Introduce your kitten to each family member one at a time, allowing her to approach each person at her own speed. Some kittens are more timid than others and may need more time to feel comfortable with new people. Children should be instructed to be very gentle with the kitten and taught that grabbing, tail pulling and teasing is not allowed. They are sure to be very excited when meeting their new friend but encourage them to use soft voices so they don't startle or scare her. It is important to always supervise young children when they are with the kitten. Although they may be cute and cuddly, if your kitten feels threatened or is being mistreated, she may react instinctively by biting or scratching.

During the first few days, put a blanket or towel with your kitten's scent on it in the family living areas for the other pets in the house to become accustomed to. Once your kitten is comfortable with her smaller space, and is eating, drinking and using the litter box, slowly allow her to explore the rest of the house while the other pets are confined. Once familiar with her surroundings, you can begin to introduce your kitten to the family pets, one at a time. All interactions with your kitten and other pets should be supervised until you are fully confident that they are safe with each other. Family members and visitors will naturally want to hold and cuddle your kitten when she arrives and in the weeks ahead. It is important to remember that this can create jealousy in your existing pets so be sure to provide extra love and attention to any other family pets as they get used to your kitten being a member of the family.

When meeting the family cat for the first time, don't expect your cat and kitten to hit it off and be fast friends immediately. If they accept one another right away, consider yourself fortunate! To begin the introductions, allow your cat to sniff and explore the kitten while she is in the carrier. Since cats are territorial, your cat may not be overjoyed with the newcomer and may show this disapproval by hissing.

This is considered normal behavior. When both animals are calm, the carrier door can be opened and the two allowed to approach one another on their own. Do not force them to interact with each other. If your cat becomes aggressive towards the kitten, you may see flattened ears, crouching, growling or even spitting. If this occurs, separate the two into different areas of the home to calm down and try again the next day. It is very important to have patience with the process! It may take a week or two and sometimes longer for them to finally settle down and accept each other so don't rush them or give up. Gradually, the existing cat will learn to enjoy your kitten or at least learn to tolerate her presence!

When introducing your kitten to the family dog, be sure that the dog is on a leash to keep him under control. Once you bring your dog and kitten together, let them sniff and investigate each other on their own terms. Again, don't force them to interact with each other. Provide your dog with lots of praise and positive reinforcement for good behavior towards the kitten. Aggressive behavior should not be tolerated and the dog should never be allowed to chase the kitten. When together, always make sure the kitten has a safe place to retreat to if she feels threatened.

Planning ahead for your kitten's homecoming will go a long way in helping your new addition to feel at home with her new family. With patience, persistence, and lots of praise for good behavior, your existing pets will learn to accept your kitten as part of the family and will come to enjoy her company for years to come.