

KC PET PROJECT

Kansas City Pet Project

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INTRODUCING YOUR CAT TO OTHER PETS

Creating peace in a home with more than one pet may require some work, but if you are patient and follow our advice, your cats should at least tolerate one another—and your dogs.

Start the Relationship(s) off Right

After you've brought your new cat home, start checking off each of these questions as you go along. Once you're able to answer "yes" to all of them, you'll be off to a good start.

- **Are all the pets spayed or neutered?**
- **Have I slowly introduced the new cat to my other cat(s) or dog by smell? Here's how:**
 - Isolate the new cat in a separate room so the cats (and/or dog) can smell one another through the door. If you don't have a spare room, use your bathroom.
 - Exchange bedding and/or switch their rooms to get them used to each other's scent.
 - Keep this up until there are no signs of stress. With luck this will take a few days, but it might take weeks or months.
- **Have I slowly introduced the new cat to my other cat(s) or dog by sight? Follow these steps:**
 - Set up a strong baby gate (preferably at least 36 inches high) in the doorway of the new cat's room.
 - Let the cats (and/or dog) get a quick look at each other and immediately praise and reward them with a treat if there's no attacking or growling.
 - Close the door.
 - Repeat this process five to 10 times in a row two to three times a day.
 - Pay attention to body language: If they seem relaxed when seeing each other, extend the time they can look at each other.
 - Always quit while you're ahead—don't keep going until the growling or signs of discomfort start. And try always to close the door on a good note.
 - Continue until everyone seems comfortable with one another. Be patient—this might take a while.
- **Have I allowed the cats (and/or dog) to interact with each other under careful supervision? Follow these guidelines:**
 - Once the cats are in view of each other it is a good idea to play with them using an interactive fishing-rod type toy. Play with the cats simultaneously, but give each his own toy to play with (this is easiest with two people). The cats will learn that being around each other means play time. This fishing-rod toy is also an excellent tool for distracting and redirecting a cat who seems ready to show aggression.
 - If you notice tensions, distract and separate everyone quickly and return to the introduction by sight step.
 - When they behave well during an interaction, reward everyone with treats and praise, making sure that each cat or dog gets the treat meant for him or her.
 - Don't leave them alone together until you're sure that they're comfortable with each other.
- **Have I kept my eye out for general signs of stress?**
 - Not using the litter box
 - Overgrooming

- Not eating or drinking adequately
- Hiding
- Vocalizations to create distance, such as hissing or growling
- **Have I recognized signs of comfort with one another?**
 - Sitting or lying near each other
 - Grooming each other
 - Walking past each other without signs of tension
 - Eating, using the cat box, grooming, or playing near each other
 - Ignoring one another (not all cats are going to be friends)
- **Have I given all the cats (and/or dog) daily individual attention, playing with them and making things interesting to keep their stress low?**
- **Do I have enough resources for all the cats in my home?**
 - As many litter boxes as cats, plus one additional box
 - Food and water dishes for each cat
 - Various high resting spaces for cats
 - Many different hiding spaces for cats



Instead of being threatened by the new cat in town, this guy is just curious about the smell that's coming through the door cracks. Mike McFarland/The HSUS

Help Your Cats Get Along Again

Use these tips to stop aggression between your cats—or at least help them tolerate each other. Check off each one as you accomplish it.

- **Make sure all the cats are spayed or neutered.**
- **Provide enough resources for all the cats:**
 - As many litter boxes as cats, plus one additional box
 - Food and water dishes for each cat
 - Various high resting spaces for cats
 - Many different hiding spaces for cats
- **Give the cats daily individual attention**, playing with each of them and making things interesting to keep their stress low.
- **Reward the cats with treats they really love when they're getting along**, which includes simply ignoring and tolerating each other when in the same room. (While you're working to get the cats to tolerate each other, always have a bag of treats with you and consistently reward all good behavior.)
- **Play with the cats simultaneously (using separate toys if necessary) so that they begin to associate play time with each other.** The best types of toys are fishing rods with feathers attached to a long string. This toy is also

very useful when you need to distract and redirect one or both cats because they've begun showing signs of aggression towards each other.

- **In the beginning of this reintroduction, the cats should only be together when you can closely monitor them,** and they should be rewarded for good behavior and played with. Do not leave the cats unsupervised until you are very confident that they are no threat to each other.
- **If your cats continue to irritate each other for as long as weeks, try starting fresh by reintroducing them** using the steps laid out in the **Start the Relationship(s) Off Right** section.

A note on hissing: Don't assume that a cat who is hissing is the bully. Hissing often means "Leave me alone!" and signals that the cat feels threatened. The bully is often less vocal, intimidating the other cat with hard stares, confidently sitting close, or edging the other cat off a place he's sitting.



A hissing cat is usually telling the bully to leave him alone. Mike McFarland/The HSUS

Help Your Cat and Dog Get Along Again

Use these tips to stop aggression between your pets—or at least help them tolerate each other. Check off each one as you accomplish it.

- **Make sure your pets are spayed/neutered.**
- **Place litter boxes where the dog can't get at them.** If your dog isn't too tall, put the litter box on a surface two to three feet off the floor. If the dog is larger than your cat, try putting the litter boxes behind a barrier (with a space that's big enough for a cat to get through but not the dog) or a baby gate.
- **Put your cat's food and water dishes where the dog can't reach.**
- **Provide your cat with hiding places and high resting spots out of a dog's reach.**
- **Separate the dog and cat when you aren't there.**
- **Keep stress levels down by giving both your cat and dog enough individual, daily attention as well as exercise, play, and interesting things to do.**
- **If one pet starts bullying the other, give the bully a time-out.** (Don't assume that a cat who is hissing is the bully. Hissing is usually the way your cat says "Leave me alone!")
 - Firmly say "No" (without yelling), calmly pick up and carry (if you can do so safely) or lead the bully to the bathroom and shut the door.
 - Ten minutes later, let him out of the bathroom as if nothing happened.
- **If all else fails, try reintroducing** your cat and dog to each other using the steps laid out in the **Start the Relationship(s) off Right** section.



Introduce them the right way, and your cat and dog could see eye to eye—and nose to nose. Mike McFarland/The HSUS

My Cat Suddenly Attacked Another Pet for No Reason

If your cat suddenly begins hissing, growling, and/or attacking another cat, your dog, or you—perhaps with her hair puffed straight up— for what appears to be no reason, she’s probably displaying "redirected aggression."

Redirected aggression is usually a reaction to one specific frightening experience: He may have seen a cat outside, heard a sudden loud noise, had his tail stepped on, or smelled or heard something that you aren’t even aware of. It can take your cat from several minutes to hours to return to her normal self.

Caution: Sudden and unexpected aggression from your cat may also be a sign that she may be experiencing a medical problem: pain or an illness such as an issue with her thyroid. If your cat’s behavior shows a sudden or drastic change, take her to your veterinarian.

Here's how to react to redirected aggression:

- **Quickly remove yourself and your other pets from the situation by isolating either the distressed cat or yourself and your other pets in another room.** (If you are able to do so safely, pick up your distressed cat using a heavy towel or blanket and put him in another room until he calms down.) Then follow these directions:
 - Once your cat is in her “safe room,” listen to her through the door to see if she is still growling. If so, keep her in the room longer. She should be in the room for a minimum of one hour.
 - Before letting your cat out of the safe room, talk to him through the door for a few minutes in a calm, happy voice. Toss a treat into the room only when he’s stopped growling, and only enter the room when you detect no signs of stress.
 - Don’t attempt to pet or hold your cat until you’re sure she’s feeling calm and safe again.
- **Avoid redirected aggression**
 - Protect your cats from situations that upset them. For example, keep them away from the windowsill or block their view if they are stressed by outdoor cats in the neighborhood.
 - Play more interactive games with your cat.
 - If one cat continually shows redirected aggression to a cat or dog she usually likes, consider reintroducing them slowly as if they never met before using the steps laid out in the **Start the Relationship(s) Off Right** section.