



Dog & Cat Introductions



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Though it might require time and patience, it is possible for your cat to learn to live with dogs.

Most cats can learn to live with dogs provided the introduction is done with time and patience. All introductions do involve a bit of risk. The steps below will help you through the introduction process as safely as possible, provided the steps are followed correctly.

Be aware that dogs with a strong "prey drive" may not ever be able to live safely with cats. Observe your dog's behavior to ensure that he is not "stalking" your cat.

Steps for introducing your dog & cat to each other

1. Familiarize them with each other's scent.

With the dog and cat in separate rooms, rub each animal's body with a towel, then switch towels so that the dog can smell the cat and the cat can smell the dog. Allow the animals enough time with the towels to get used to each other's smell.

2. Allow the cat and dog to be in two separate rooms that are adjointed by a common door.

Keep them in these adjoining rooms until they are relaxed being next door to each other. Once neither animal is scratching at the door to reach their new neighbor, you are ready for Step 3.

3. While holding your dog ON LEASH, allow the cat and dog to be in the same room. Do not draw attention to the fact that they are in the room together. They will figure it out soon enough. If possible, involve your dog in an ON-LEASH game

or practice obedience with really tasty treats. The goal is to get your dog interested in you and not focused on your cat. If your dog is highly focused on the cat, continue holding onto the leash and wait for your dog's interest to diminish while keeping her engaged in an on-leash activity.

Keep in mind that this could take a while. It could be 30 minutes, 3 hours, 3 days or 3 weeks. Don't rush it. The goal is to habituate your dog to your cat. Calmly verbally praise your dog and reward her with treats or petting when she is calm around your cat. You **MUST NOT** move to the next step until the dog regards the cat in the room as 'no big deal'.

- **NOTE:** If your dog is still excited by your cat and you run out of time with this exercise, you must put your dog in a separate area from your cat until you are able to complete Step 3.



4. Now that your dog is relaxed around your cat on leash, let go of the leash handle. Dropping the leash should not be brought to the dog's attention. It should be casual. Keep the leash attached to your dog's collar, however, in case your dog suddenly decides to chase the cat. This will allow you to grab the dog quickly without putting yourself in the middle of the animals' conflict. Let your dog drag the leash, with you supervising, in the presence of your cat until both animals are able to relax around each other.

- **NOTE:** During this stage your cat should always have a place to escape to, whether it is under a doggie gate that your dog can't get past or up to the top of a cat tree that your dog can't reach. Never leave your dog dragging the leash unsupervised as the leash can get caught on things and your dog could accidentally strangle itself.

5. Under supervision, allow your dog and cat to be in the same area off leash. Always continue to provide your cat with places to escape to. If at any point either animal gets too obnoxious with the other, go back a step or two and slowly build back up. At this point, you should be well on the way to being one big happy family.

Tips for helping resident cat(s) adjust to a new dog

1. Consider your cat's personality. Before bringing home a new dog, consider if your cat is "adaptable" enough to get used to a new dog. Confident cats or those who've lived with dogs in the past tend to adjust with time. Overly fearful or timid cats may have more difficulty, depending on the exuberance of the dog.

2. Select the dog that suits your cat's personality as well as your lifestyle. Consider an older, smaller, calm dog if your cat is on the timid side. Mature dogs tend to be less interested in chasing other animals (as well as tend to be already housetrained and less destructive). If your

cat is young, confident, and active, it may not mind living with a puppy, an adolescent, or a young adult dog.

3. Be sure to give your cat lots of individual time after the dog has moved in. Just because you've added a new member to your family doesn't mean you should ignore your cat. In fact, a great way to prevent conflict between your animals is to lavish personal play time on each animal individually to lessen any "competition" between the two. Consider using a synthetic pheromone such as Feliway when the new dog arrives. Cats mark their territory with scents called pheromones, and synthetic pheromones mimic the scent that cat's use. This helps to calm them in times of stress.

4. Place litter boxes in dog-free areas. If your cat is worried that your dog will disturb her during bathroom time, she may choose to avoid the litter box. To prevent this, be sure the litter box is placed in a "safe" area to which the dog does not have access. It will also be important to follow the rule of having one more litter box than you have cats during this time to help relieve stress.

6. Be sure that your cats have plenty of "dog-free safe zones" around the house. This can include high areas such as the top of a cat tree or a room where the dog isn't allowed, etc. Place your cat's food and water in a dog-free area or make sure the dog is not in the area while your cat is eating. This will allow your cat to eat peacefully without worrying that the dog will steal her food. Remember that time and patience are the best medicine for everyone getting along. 🐾