



Introducing Your New Cat to Your Resident Dog

Dogs can kill a cat very easily, even if they're only playing. All it takes is one shake and the cat's neck can break. Some dogs have such a high prey drive they should never be left alone with a cat. Dogs usually want to chase and play with cats, and cats usually become afraid and defensive. Introductions should be done slowly to ensure everyone's safety.

Practice Your Dog's Skills

If your dog doesn't already know the tricks "sit," "down," "come," and "stay," you should begin working on them before you take your new cat home. Small pieces of food will increase your dog's motivation to perform, which will be necessary in the presence of such a strong distraction as a new cat. Even if your dog already knows these tricks, continue to practice them with distractions in the room.

Confinement and Scent Swapping

Your new cat should be confined to a small- to medium-sized room while she gets acclimated to your home. She should not come in contact with your dog for the first two weeks, at least. While your new cat is confined, start scent swapping. Switch your dog and cats bedding, rub a towel on one and place it in the other's sleeping area, etc. You want your dog and cat to be able to smell each other's scent without a face-to-face introduction.

The Introduction Process

After your new cat and resident dog have been exposed to each other's scents as described above and your new cat is comfortable in her new space, you can attempt a face-to-face introduction in a casual, controlled manner. Keep your pup leashed up at all times during the introduction so that both you and the cat feel safe. Allow your cat to move as she likes, resuming normal activities around the house. If the cat starts to express interest in the dog, keep your dog occupied by practicing some of the tricks above. You can even just feed him treats while the cat investigates. If your dog stiffens or becomes hyper-focused on the cat, end the introduction here and try again another time. Keep this introduction short, and try your best to end on a positive note.

Try your best not to put tension on your dog's leash during this interaction. He doesn't need so much slack in the leash that he can run and chase the cat, but just

enough so that you aren't putting any tension on the collar. Adding additional tension can make the dog feel unnecessarily tense when meeting the cat which can lead to a more negative outcome.

Remember that lots of short visits are better than a few long visits. Don't drag out the visit so long that the dog becomes uncontrollable or either animal becomes uncomfortable. Repeat this step several times, allowing the dog and cat to co-exist together in a low-pressure way, until both the dog and cat are tolerating each other's presence without fear, aggression, or other undesirable behaviors.

Positive Reinforcement

Your new cat may be afraid of your dog at first, especially if she's never been around dogs before. You'll want to reward her often with lots of praise and treats. We want both your new cat and your resident dog to experience lots of good things when they're around each other in order to build a positive relationship.

Long-term Management

Keep your dog and cat separated when you aren't home until you're certain your cat will be safe. This may take weeks, months, or you may never want to leave them home alone together. Either way, be sure your cat has plenty of escape routes to get away from the dog if necessary. This may include a separate room your dog doesn't have access to, a tall cat tree or cat shelving, etc.

Precautions

Dogs like to eat cat food! You should keep the cat food out of your dog's reach. You shouldn't plan on free feeding your cat, but if you do, the food should be kept up on a high shelf or in the cat's safe room. Eating cat feces is also a common behavior in dogs, so don't be surprised if your resident dog finds a new snack in the litter box. There are no health hazards to your dog, but it is likely not a behavior you prefer. It also may be disruptive or upsetting to your cat to have her space invaded or occupied. Unfortunately, any aversives you use to keep your dog away from the litterbox will keep your cat away as well. The best solution is to place the litter box where your dog can't access it; just be sure your cat still has easy access.

A Word About Kittens And Puppies

Because they're so much smaller, kittens are in more danger of being injured, of



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being killed by a young, energetic dog, or by a predatory dog. A kitten will need to be kept separate from an especially energetic dog until she is fully-grown, and even then she should never be left alone with the dog. Usually, a well-socialized cat will be able to give a puppy appropriate corrections, but some cats don't have enough confidence to do this. If you have an especially shy cat, you might need to keep her separated from your puppy until he matures enough to have more self-control.

When To Get Help

If introductions don't go smoothly or if you have any questions about the introduction process, contact Homeward Pet Adoption Center's Animal Behavior Manager or seek other professional help immediately. Animals can be severely injured in fights, and the longer the problem continues, the harder it can be to resolve. Conflicts between pets in the same family can often be resolved with professional help.