

Dog to Cat Introduction

Households with dogs and cats are amazing!



Congrats on deciding to expand your furry family!

An introduction process is needed to ensure your resident dog accepts their new kitty. To start, keeping your newbie cat separated from the resident dog is a good beginning to their relationship. This will help them become tolerant of one another, or may even become besties! You will have varying degrees of tolerance and friendship depending on the breed, temperament, and socialization history for the cat and the dog. Remember to go slowly and read your cat and dog's behaviors to go at their pace.

1 HOME PREP and SAFE SPACE for your new kitty

Create spaces where your cat and dog feel safe and comfortable



- Set up a small bedroom or bathroom that has a door as the new kitty's safe space and base camp. Make sure the room that separates them has a solid sturdy door between. Add a baby gate to the doorway between their safe spaces to avoid any unintended interactions.
- The cat's room should have all the basics - litter boxes, fresh water and food, cat towers, soft beds, and "good" places to hide where you can still get access to them. Block "bad" places to hide like under the bed, dressers, and other tight spots where you cannot see or interact with the new kitty.
- Bring toys, treats, and attention as they settle into their new space. Keep the new cat completely separate and in their safe zone with only human interaction for one day. If the kitty is nervous or fearful, keep them separate longer until they feel comfortable in their safe space. They show comfort and feel secure by seeking attention, playing, resting comfortably, and having relaxed body language.
- The rest of the house can remain your resident dog's base camp, making sure to have the same basics and enrichment items for them as well.

2 SCENT Stage

Cats and dogs communicate most with their noses, so this step is important to do well!



- Place a towel in the favorite bed or resting spot for each animal. Place a yummy treat or their favorite toy on the scented item so they have something good at the same time they smell the other animal. After they have rested on it for one day, it will have their scent on the towel. The next day, swap the towels so the cat gets the dog's towel, and the dog gets the cat's towel. Make sure to continue adding treats and toys with the scented item. Do this every day for a week. That is usually enough time, but consider each animal's uniqueness to guide the timing. Take more time if either one has signs of fear, anxiety, or stress.

Some things to watch for are:

WARNING SIGNS for CATS:

Hissing, Growling, Arched back, Crouching, Lunging, Tail tucked, Ears pinned back, Wide eyes, Hiding

WARNING SIGNS for DOGS:

Growling, Tail tucked, Ears pinned back, Lunging, Looking away, Raising a paw, Lip licking, Yawning

- Do "space swap" with giving each animal the other's territory. Make sure to NOT LET THEM SEE each other as you swap spaces. Use a carrier to keep your cat hidden from the dog as you swap spaces.
- Keep Feliway diffusers in multiple locations in the house to add "feel good" pheromones for your cat.
- If there is no warning signs after a day or two, go to the next step. If there is any anxiety or other adverse reactions don't be afraid to slow down or back up a step. Going slowly now will ensure you set up your cat and your dog to have a good relationship!

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3 HEARING Stage - FOOD / TREAT / PLAY (Still NO SIGHT)

Add "good memories" with treats, play, and other fun things while still separated



- After the cat and dog are comfortable with each others' scents and space swapping, start feeding their meals on opposite sides of the closed door. They should still NOT see each other, but simply enjoy their meal or treat while being able to SMELL one another with the door as the barrier.
- With the door closed, stay with the cat while your helper stays with the dog - each on one side of the closed door. One person plays with the cat, the other person helping plays with the dog. Make sure the other animal hears the other's toys making noise, running, or meowing or barking as part of the session. Make sure to watch for any warning signs and stop any sessions if they occur. Start again after the cat and dog are both calm. Five minutes is enough time for a normal play session. Try to do two sessions each day - more if possible. Do this for few days.
- If they don't have any fearful or stressed reactions, do this same session the next day with the door open, baby gate still in place, and a towel draped over the baby gate. We still do not want them to see one another yet. This will be a more intense session where they can hear each other clearly and smell one another as they play. Use treats to reward the cat and the dog individually for being fun play partners and remaining calm. Do this for another day or two.
- Add more playtime with toys, catnip, and other fun things for each - still separated by the door.
- Continue space and scent swapping, and make sure they still do not see one another yet.
- This is where patience is your friend! Go slowly to set this foundation properly.

4 SIGHT Stage

Great work - your kitty and dog are calm and comfortable so it is time for the next step!



- Now that they remain calm, the next day you will start allowing the cat and the dog to see each other. Open the door a small amount. Slowly move the towel so you reveal about ¼ of the baby gate where they can now begin to see one another. Have multiple play sessions like this, and remember to give them yummy meals on their respective sides of the baby gate. Still keep them 2-4 feet away from one another at first, slowly allowing them to investigate each other over the next day or two. Try to do at least two sessions pulling more of the towel back so they see more each time. Do more sessions as needed.
- Continue to "swap spaces" at this point, where you allow the dog to go into the cat's room and allow the cat and dog to explore the rest of the house. This will help a lot as you open up the whole house to your new kitty!
- Have toys to distract them and blankets to use as barriers if any anxious or aggressive behaviors start.

5 HANGING in the same space

Now your kitty and dog are starting to become pals, so let's expand their time together!



- Now that your cat and dog are doing well with the separation, it is time to let them do the same play sessions and meals in the same space. It is best to do this in the area outside the cat's safe space. Make sure you bring some of their favorite things into that room so they feel secure with familiar things. This could be their favorite cat tower, their bed, blanket, and toys. The cat should feel like they have an escape route where they can retreat if they get scared. Keep the dog on a leash to start in case they get overexcited. Share short times together - 10 or 15 minutes to start, gradually increasing time.
- Use toys and playtime, attention, treats, and meals to keep each kitty focused on fun, happy things!
- Supervise their interactions until there is no need for distractions and they comfortably can hang out with each other for more time. Next, try sessions with the dog off leash, and do longer sessions.

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6 OPEN PLAYTIME and LIVING

Buddy time can now be more open and move to unsupervised



- This is the last step, so as soon as you see them both relaxed and calm together you can build up to letting them hang out unsupervised. The sooner they get used to one another, the sooner they can all roam freely in your house. Build up slowly to allow them to hang out with each other for 1/2 days with minimal supervision.
- The next step is having their first full day or overnight together. Be prepared to intervene if anything happens, but if they reached this stage and everyone is doing well, and I would not expect any big issues.
- HOWEVER: kitties and dogs both have bad days just like us, so there may be times when issues arise.






If issues arise - remember it's a marathon, not a sprint!

- ♥ Each kitty and dog has a distinct personality. It is important to recognize their individuality and be able to read their behaviors, vocalizations, and body language.
- ♥ Be prepared to STOP sessions if tensions get too high, or the cat or dog become scared or overstimulated. A soft blanket is good to have on hand to scoop up a kitty or drape over them to create a barrier between a cat and a dog, and gives you a way to safely separate them if things get tense.
- ♥ Be patient! If you go too quickly and you lose progress, don't fret. Simply take a step back and start over when the cat and dog are calm, or the next day.
- ♥ This process is never linear, so going forward and backward is expected. Stay upbeat - kitties and dogs can sense your tension too! Use positive reinforcement and create happy associations through treats, play, and attention to always end on a positive note to build good memories!

7 GENERAL TIMELINE EXAMPLE

Remember - every cat and dog has their own personality and history. They will let you know how they are feeling with their actions and body language.

Have patience, and go at their pace!

-  **DAY 1:** keep kitty in their separate safe space and only have human interaction. Keep the dog away from the other side of the door for the first 24 hours so kitty can get used to their new environment and you. Make sure to have a few towels and blankets in the kitty's space that they rest or sleep on. This will deposit the kitty's scent on the towels. Do the same separately with the dog. This is the first step to prepare for the introduction with scent-sharing!
-  **DAY 2 - 3:** Swap towels with the dog and the cat. Do this for a day or two. Move slower or more quickly as the kitty and dog allow. Read their behaviors and look for warning signs. Do a space swap.
-  **DAY 4 - 5:** Hearing stage - With the door closed, allow the cat and dog to hear one another from the other side as they play and have yummy tasty meals. After they remain calm for this activity, do the same playing and having tasty meals but now with the door open, baby gate in place, and a towel over the baby gate.
-  **DAY 6:** Sight stage - With the door open, pull the towel back over a few play sessions to reveal the cat to the dog for the first time. Next, have tasty meals and treats on each side of the baby gate. Continue space swap.
-  **DAY 7+:** Remove the baby gate and play in the same space. Have a helper keep the dog in a harness to be prepared for any overexcitement. Do longer sessions over the course of the next few days, or as they allow. Build up to longer sessions, and unsupervised play. Once all is calm, allow them access to the whole house!