



Cat to Dog Introductions

Dogs and cats, especially those who were not socialized with the opposite species when they were young, will require time to adjust to each other. Dogs may want to chase and play with cats, and cats may be afraid and defensive. Slow introductions help prevent fear and aggression problems from developing. First impressions are important to a cat, so you want the initial meetings to be as stress-free as possible for it.

- **Prepare your dog** for the arrival of your new cat by refreshing its obedience skills. Two exercises that are important for the dog to do well are a recall (coming when called) and “leave it”. These skills will help you control your dog if it gets overexcited around your cat.
- **Confine your new cat in a room** with food, water and litter box. Start by the doorway to that room with a baby gate between them. Fill your pockets with treats. Walk your dog slowly by the doorway several times for a couple of days. Praise for calm behavior, and toss the cat a treat as well. Your cat will associate your dog with delicious treats. If your dog overreacts to the cat, distract and get its attention focused on you. Avoid using leash corrections. Instead, get your dog’s attention by asking to sit. Use treats to reward for obedience in the presence of your new cat! Your cat should be free to approach the baby gate to get closer to the dog or to retreat if it wants to. Reward any time it approaches the baby gate by tossing it treats.
- **Let your new cat set the pace.** If it chooses to hide under the furniture when you and your dog walk by, let it. It simply means your intros will take longer; maybe weeks. Keep in mind that cats can take months to form relationships with other animals. Never attempt to force any interactions by holding your cat, putting it into a crate or carrier or restricting its movement in any way.
- **If your cat doesn’t seem afraid** as you pass by the doorway of the room, or if it tries to jump over the gate, you can introduce them in a large room. Make sure your cat can get away if needed. It should have the freedom to retreat where the dog can’t follow.
- **Keep your dog on a leash** during these introductions and for the first couple of weeks. Allow the leash to be loose, but hold onto it in case your dog decides to try to chase your cat. Use recall and “leave it” if your dog starts nosing or following your cat. If your dog listens, be sure to give it a very special treat. Keep your cat and dog confined in separate areas of the house when you’re not present or can’t directly supervise
- **Interrupt any chasing, barking or agitated behavior** from your dog. Redirect attention to another activity or ask obedience skills for food rewards. Avoid scolding, yelling or jerking on your dog’s leash. A positive approach is crucial; you want your dog and cat to learn a pleasant association with each other’s presence.
- **Most cats will accept a young dog** and correct him when necessary. Be sure your cat’s nails are trimmed before bringing her home so that she doesn’t hurt your dog if she corrects him.
- **Your dog shouldn’t have access** to your cat’s litterbox or food. If he does, it will be highly stressful to your cat, and your dog may eat the feces and litter. To prevent your dog from eating your cat’s food, consider feeding your cat on a high surface, like a window sill, dresser, shelf or cat tree furniture.