



# Dog to Cat Introductions

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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.

## INTRODUCTIONS

- **Practice obedience** and make sure your new dog understands a few basic commands before introducing it to your cat. Work with it on sit, down, come and stay. Use tidbits of food to increase your dog's motivation. Be sure it obeys the commands consistently, with a food motivator, so that it will perform even in the presence of a cat.
- **Make the encounter positive.** Place food tidbits on either side of the door that is separating the dog and cat. Each animal will approach the door to get the treat and will smell the other animal. They will begin to associate the other animals' smell as a pleasant experience. Work up to feeding them their regular meal on either side of the door.
- **Swap scents** by switching sleeping blankets between your new dog and your resident cat so they become accustomed to each other's scent. Rub a towel on one animal and put it under the food dish of the other. Do this with each animal in the house.
- **Switch living areas** and let your dog have free run of the house while your cat is confined to one room. This will give your dog time to smell the cat's scent. Then confine your dog while the cat roams free and sniffs the house.
- **Have a controlled face-to-face meeting** after the dog and cat have become comfortable eating on opposite sides of the door and with each other's scent. Put your dog's leash on and, using treats, have him lay down and stay. Have someone else, who will remain calm, bring in the cat. Quietly sit down and offer a special treat. The cat should not be tightly restrained and should be allowed to retreat if the situation is stressful. Be sure the cat can escape to a hiding place. At first, the cat and the dog should be on opposite sides of the room. Lots of short visits are better than a few long visits. Repeat brief meetings until both animals are tolerating each other without fear, aggression or other undesirable behavior. Bring them closer together with each visit.
- **Let your cat explore** the dog at its own pace, with the dog on leash and in a down-stay. At the same time, give your dog treats and praise for its calm behavior. If your dog gets up from the stay position, it should be repositioned with a treat lure, praised and rewarded for obeying. If your cat runs away or becomes aggressive, you're progressing too fast.
- **Use positive reinforcement.** Although your dog must be taught that chasing or being rough with your cat is unacceptable, it must also be taught how to behave appropriately, such as sitting, coming when called, or lying down in return for a treat. If your dog is punished whenever your cat is around, and never has good things happen in the cat's presence, the dog may become aggressive toward the cat. Consistently reward your dog for behaving correctly.