

Cat to Dog Introductions

This handout will address how to introduce a new cat or dog to the species already in your home. Before bringing a new cat or dog into the home, consider the dog's prey drive. Some breeds, such as hounds, pit bulls, beagles and Jack Russells, have naturally higher prey drives. If you know your dog has killed small animals in the past, reconsider bringing a new cat into the home.

Step 1. Separate the animals

- Keep the cat in one room with its bed, food and litter box.
- Close the door to this room and enforce with a baby gate if possible; some dogs can open doors!

Step 2. Work on basic skills with your dog

- It will be important to be in control of your dog and to have his focus while introducing him to a new cat.
- Perfect the "Sit," "Stay," "Come," and "Down" commands with your canine.



Step 3. Make positive associations between the two animals

- Give the cat's blanket to your dog to introduce him to the cat's scent.
- Associate the blanket/scent with your dog's food; allow your dog to eat his meals near the blanket/scent.
- Similarly, give your dog's blanket to your cat to make the same positive associations with food.
- You can begin to feed your animals near the baby gate or door that is dividing them. This way, they will associate each other's presence with something positive; i.e. food.

Step 4. Controlled Meeting

- Now that your cat and dog are comfortable eating on opposite sides of a door and have made positive associations with each other's scent, you can do a controlled meeting.
- Keep your dog on a leash and have him either sit or lie down and stay. Have another person bring the cat into the room with the dog.
- Keep your dog's attention towards you; do not let him stare down the cat
- Allow the first few meetings to be short; about 3-5 minutes
- Praise your animals with treats and rewards for calm behavior around each other
- Don't be discouraged if your animals are fearful at first; move slowly and have patience; consider returning to step 3 to work on positive associations if necessary.
- Introductions should be a slow process! Appropriately introducing a cat to a dog could take anywhere from days to months depending on the situation. It could be the difference between life and death of the new animal if not introduced correctly.

Step 5. Let your cat roam

- Once your cat and dog are comfortable in each other's presence, you can let your cat roam while your dog remains on leash
- Begin with short interactions
- Keep your dog focused; reward him for calm behavior
- Be patient; you might need to return to steps 3 and 4 if the animals show fear or aggression

Step 6. Directly supervise all interactions

- Consider keeping your dog on leash while the cat is roaming the house
- Keep the dog and cat separated when you are not home until you are certain your cat will be safe
- Continue to reward your dog for calm behavior and also when the cat is in proximity
- Your cat may give correcting behaviors to your dog. These could include swiping or hissing if your dog acts unruly. It is important that your dog respond to these corrections by backing off and that you not punish your cat for these behaviors.

Step 7. Precautions

- Cat food has very high amounts of protein in it; thus cat food and cat feces is a very tasty thing to dogs! Keep your cat's food and litter box out of reach by use of baby gates or inaccessible areas such as the closet (for the litter box).
- Punishing your dog for eating from the litter box is not an effective solution; the best solution is to place the litter box where the dog can't access it
- Do not "booby trap" the litter box – this will only deter your cat from using it also and create new problems!

