

Introducing Your New Dog to Your Resident Dog

Proper introductions are important to help dogs adjust to one another and start to build their relationship. If you have a dog at home, here are a few tips to introduce your new dog:

Choose a Neutral Location: Introduce the dogs in a neutral location so that your resident dog is less likely to view the newcomer as an intruder. Each dog should be handled by a separate person. With both dogs on leash, take them to an area with which neither is familiar (a park, neighbor's yard, or going for a walk together). If you have more than one resident dog in your household, it is best to introduce the resident dogs to the new dog one dog at a time. Two or more resident dogs may have the tendency to "gang up" on the newcomer.

Use Positive Reinforcement: From the first time meeting, you want both dogs to expect "good things" to happen when they're in each other's presence. While keeping the leashes loose, let them sniff each other. As they do, talk to them in a happy, friendly tone of voice. After a short time, get both dog's attention and give each dog a treat in return for obeying a simple command, like "sit". Take the dogs for a walk and let them sniff and investigate each other at intervals. Continue with the "happy talk," food rewards and simple commands.

Be Aware of Body Postures: One body posture that indicates things are going well is a "play-bow." One dog will crouch with their front legs on the ground and their hind end in the air. This is an invitation to play that usually elicits friendly behavior from the other dog. Watch carefully for body postures that indicate an escalation in response, including hair standing up on the dog's back, teeth-baring, deep growls, a stiff-legged gait, or a prolonged stare. If you see such postures, interrupt the interaction immediately by calmly and gently getting each dog interested in something else. For example, both handlers can call their dog to them, have them sit or lie down, and reward each with a treat. The dogs will become interested in the treats which will prevent the situation from escalating into aggression. Try letting the dogs interact again, but this time for a shorter time period and/or a greater distance from each other.

Taking the Dogs Home: When the dogs seem to be tolerating each other without fearful or aggressive responses and the investigative greeting behaviors have tapered off, you can take them home.

Once Home: Do not leave the dogs alone until you are confident they get along.



Puppies and Adult Dogs

Puppies usually pester adult dogs, and before the age of four months, may not be able to recognize subtle body postures from adult dogs signaling they've had enough. Well-socialized adult dogs with good temperments may set limits with puppies with a growl or snarl. These behaviors are normal and should be allowed. Dogs that aren't well socialized, or that have a history of fighting with other dogs, may attempt to set limits with more aggressive behaviors, such as biting, which could harm the puppy. For this reason, a puppy shouldn't be left alone with an adult dog until you're confident the puppy isn't in any danger. Be sure to give the adult dog some quiet time away from the puppy, and some individual attention, too!

Introducing Your New Dog to Your Resident Cat

Dogs and cats can usually live together peacefully, although creating a harmonious blended family requires planning, patience, and careful guidance on your part. Remember that a dog can kill a cat very easily, even if they are only playing, so ensuring you take proper step to introduce your pets is crucial.

Before you bring your new dog home, do the following for your resident cat:

- Create a safe place/room for your cat that your dog cannot access. Your cat should have a safe location in every room, even if it is only the top of a bookcase.
- Put your cat's litter box in a safe area. Many dogs eat cat feces, and if the dog ambushes the cat in the litter box, the cat may become afraid to use the litter box and relieve themselves somewhere else in the house.
- Keep the cat's food and water dishes in a safe area as well.

If you are introducing a dog to a household with a kitten, use extra caution. A kitten is more likely to be injured by a young, energetic dog.

First Day/Week Introductions

Put your cat in their safe space and let the dog roam the house for 30-45 minutes. This allows the dog ot "meet" the cat by smell only. Then, take your dog for a walk and allow your cat to roam the house, so that your cat may "meet" your new dog by smell only.

When you return from your walk, keep your new dog on a short leash. This will allow you to correct your dog if they see your resident cat. Your cat's first reaction to your new dog will likely be to hiss and/or run and hide. This is normal! Do not allow your dog to bolt after your cat. Keep them seperated for now, until they are comfortable for meeting face-to-face.

Eating

For the first week or two, have your cat and new dog eat on opposite sides of the door to the cat's safe place/room. This will establish a positive association with each other's smells. Don't put the food so close to the door that the cats get too upset to eat. Gradually move the bowls closer to the door until they can both eat calmly.

Smell

Switch blankets or beds between your cat and your new dog so they can get used to each other's scent. You can also rub a towel on your new dog and put it underneath the food bowl of your cat. This step can be done with all pets in the home.

Greetings From a Distance

As your new dog and cat see each other in the home, let them check each other out from a distance. Talk to them smoothly, and reward them with treats and praise for good behavior. Once your dog (on leash) and cat can be in the same room together, you are ready to start face-to-face interactions.

Face-to-Face Introductions

After your new cat and resident dog have become comfortable eating on opposite sides of the door, and have been exposed to each other's scents, you can attempt a face-to-face introduction in a controlled manner.

If your dog doesn't already know commands, "Sit," "Down," "Come," and "Stay," you should begin working on them. This will help keep your dog calm in your new cat's presence.

Put your dog's leash on, and using treats, have them sit or lie down and stay. Have another family member or friend enter the room and quietly sit next to your new cat, but don't have them physically restrain the cat. Have this person offer your cat some special treats or catnip to make them feel more comfortable. At first, the cat and dogs should be on opposite sides of the room. Remember, many of short visits are better than a few long visits. Don't drag out the visits so long that the dog becomes uncontrollable. Repeat this step several times until both the cat and dog are tolerating each other's presence without fear, aggression, or other undesirable behavior.

Next, allow your cat freedom to explore your dog at their own pace, with the dog still on-leash and in a "down stay." Meanwhile, keep giving your dog treats and praise for their calm behavior. If your cat runs away or becomes aggressive, you're progressing too fast. Go back to the previous introduction steps.

You may want to keep your dog on-leash and with you whenever your cat is free in the house during the introduction process. Be sure that your cat has an escape route, high perches, and a place to hide. Keep your dog and cat separated when you aren't home until you're certain your cat will be safe.

