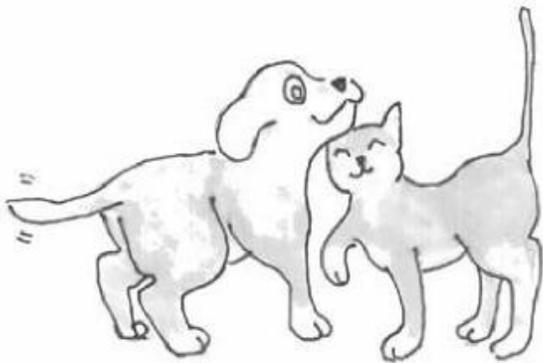


Cats & Dogs – Living Happily Ever After

Many cats and dogs live together harmoniously. However, they don't speak the same language and can easily get off on the wrong paw. Once they've had a bad interaction, it's very difficult for them to kiss and make up. Slow introductions and well planned, positive first interactions are important.

It can take anywhere from a couple of weeks to a few months before you can safely leave your animals alone and unsupervised. The length of time an introduction will take depends on **your cat's and dog's temperaments** and the **degree of human commitment to management and training**.

Some dogs have a strong prey drive and may not be able to live with a cat. Judging by breed or genetic disposition alone, however, is not recommended. Ideally a dog should be well-trained, well-managed and have a low prey drive, to live easily with a cat. Age is also a factor. A puppy and kitten may become friends quickly, but don't count on it.



If you are introducing a kitten to an adult dog, the kitten should preferably be 6 months or older. Although a young kitten may be less fearful of dogs, she may also be more rambunctious, causing a dog to chase her. Even one playful dog nip, or paw to the back can really hurt a small kitten. At 6 months, a kitty is sturdy and athletically able to defend itself from most dogs; its personality is relatively defined.

Cats who are self-confident (not shy), with a mellow, easy going, outgoing personality generally make the best dog friends. An adult cat who is accustomed to dogs may be less likely to be hurt by an inexperienced dog.

Most important, both animals should feel comfortable in their territory before any introductions begin.

Initially exposing them to each other's scent will help with the face-to-face introduction. Rub a sock on each one and let the other one sniff it. Pairing this with a treat, creates a positive association with the smell of the other. When they can respond positively to scent, it's time to move on to seeing each other

How can I manage my cat?

When first bringing home a new cat or new dog, confine your cat to a safe room where she has food, water, litter box and a bed. The dog should not be allowed in this room. If the cat is new to the home, she needs time to adjust not only to her new territory but to you. The cat should be eating, drinking, using the litter box and coming to you when you enter the room before any introductions begin.

Pairing the dog's scent with a treat can help a cat make a positive association with the dog. Cats generally do not respond well to punishment, but do great with redirection. Before kitty does something naughty, like hiss or take a swipe at Fido, throw her a toy or distract her with your presence.

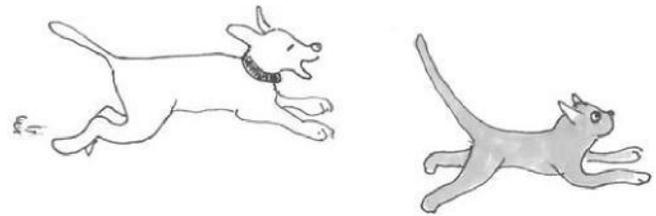
If the cat was in the residence first, keep her around the family while you are home. It's a good idea to keep indoor/outdoor kitties inside for several weeks when you first bring a new dog home. If an indoor/outdoor cat feels scared or neglected, she may leave and move in with a friendly neighbor.

How can I manage my dog?

If you haven't taken a basic dog training class, such as our Family Dog 1 or Small Dog 1 training, we highly suggest it so you can understand and use the basic cues when introducing your pets.

The dog needs to learn NOT to chase the cat:

You will need to be a keen observer and learn your dog's arousal or targeting signals.



Control the dog with tie-downs, crates and leashes whenever the cat will be in the area.

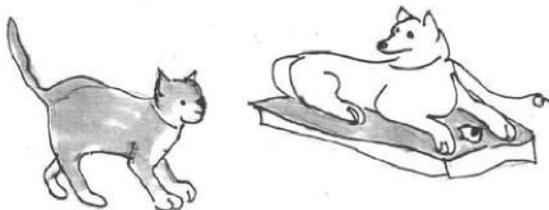
Close doors and use baby gates when needed.

Practice Attention: Call the dog's name or make an attention noise; mark (yes!) and reward him when he looks at you. Mark and reward when the dog looks away from the cat. Reward all calm behavior!

Redirect your dog's attention if he starts to stare at the cat. This is the beginning of predatory behavior - and the moment you are able to regain attention. Get him to look away and generously reward him for deferring. Practice the "Leave It" command in a variety of situations so he understands that means to look at you!

How can I introduce my cat and dog?

Once the cat is comfortable with the scent of the dog and vice versa, you can start to introduce them **at** the door of the safe room. Have lots of their favorite treats available and ready. Put a secure baby gate in the doorway of the cat's room (the kind that is a few inches off the floor) so the cat can slip under it. You can also prop the door open just enough so the cat can slip out, but the dog can't slip in.



Have a blanket or bed up high on a shelf or provide a tall, sturdy cat tree. With the door open, but blocked by the baby gate, walk your dog on a leash slowly by the doorway several times each day. Praise and treat him for calm behavior and then toss the cat a treat as well. If the cat comes close to the baby gate, reward her with a treat. Your cat should set the pace of the introduction as she may need more time to trust the dog.

If your cat isn't afraid of the dog at the doorway, the next step is to introduce them in a large room. Your dog should be on leash, tie down or in a crate (i.e. under physical control). Stand near your dog and give him something to do; Sit, Watch Me, Down, Touch; and then bring the cat in. The cat should have the freedom to get away from the dog by seeking a high perch, going under furniture or going back to the safe room.

These interactions should be relatively short. Both animals should get treats for being calm; reward the dog for looking at the cat and then back at you. This can be repeated several times a day with the sessions gradually getting longer over a period of weeks.

As the new cat or cat of the house begins to explore the home from her safe haven, give her high places in the living area to retreat to so she doesn't have to meet up with the dog on ground level. Do not leave the dog and cat unsupervised while they are all learning how to feel safe. As with the cat, it's important to redirect your dog rather than punish him so he associates the cat with all that's good in life.

Is it Play or is she Prey?

“Play” is not necessarily the same for a dog and a cat. Dogs are predators by nature and cats are sometimes their prey. The problem, however, is that much of our interaction with both dogs and cats involves heightening prey drive, think wand toys with feathers or squeaky toys with soft insides. In expecting our dogs to respect the cat, we now want to control that same prey drive by teaching the dog to discriminate chasing a cat from chasing a ball or toy! This may take some time.

A well-exercised dog: Teaching Spot a strong “retrieve” with a toy or a ball is a way to help your dog expend energy and learn what is appropriate to chase. Dogs perceive rules for living with a cat indoors differently from outside: It is hard, close to impossible, to control the temptation to chase outdoors.

As guardian of both your cat and dog, they will look to you for love and care. You must show the cat that you control the dog so that she will not be attacked. You must show the dog that he is loved while he shares his family with this strange creature called the cat.

If your animals aren't getting along, you need to step back and give them time and their own safe spaces again. This situation is unlikely to get better without your positive intervention. We recommend that you contact a trainer who specializes in both dog and cat behavior modification.

Behavior Resources:

Marin Humane's [Behavior & Training](#) department conducts various cat workshops. Sign up on our [Cat Behavior](#) (MarinHumane.org/oh-behave/cats) page for the next available class series. We also have **Cat Behavior Consultants** who are available for private training or consultations (on-site or in-home) at 415.506.6284 or CatBehavior@MarinHumane.org.

More information about cat behavior is available by clicking [here](#) or on our website at MarinHumane.org/oh-behave/handouts.

