

Introducing Your Pets

Are you bringing home a second, third, or maybe even a fourth or fifth pet? Then please read this! The introduction process is *critical*, especially for cats—it can mean the difference between a lifetime of love versus a lifetime of loathing!

Please be patient during your new pet's transition into your home, since your pet has been used to a different routine, sights, and smells. You'll need to teach it about its new home.

Remember to make sure any young children are supervised with your new pet, to ensure the development of a healthy, respectful relationship. Take the time to educate (your) children how to treat a pet, and you will be rewarded with a friendship that lasts a lifetime!

The key to a successful transition is a SLOW transition! Here's some helpful advice to follow to make the pet introduction process successful – and please don't rush the process!

Before the Introductions

New Puppy/ Dog to a Cat's House: If you are bringing a new dog or puppy into a home with a cat, make changes in the cat's environment well in advance of the dog's arrival. This way, your cat won't blame the dog for what she sees as unnecessary upheaval. For instance: move the cat's bowls onto a counter, washing machine, or another out of reach location. Dogs are very attracted to cat food, due to its higher fat content and flavor. They are also attracted to cat feces. Make certain that both the cat's food dish and litter box are well out of your new dog's reach, but still accessible to your cat. Your cat won't get as stressed if these changes in her surroundings occur gradually, before the new dog arrives.

New Kitten/ Cat to a Dog's House: If you are bringing a new kitten or cat into your dog's home, get the supplies for the cat or kitten in advance, and teach your dog that these items are off limits. Your cat will need a safe spot up high where she can get away from the dog and watch what's going on. This could be on top of the fridge, dresser, or a cat tree. Once the cat is comfortable watching from a distance, she will gradually get curious and come down to investigate. Do not try to rush this process. Your cat's comfort depends on being able to adjust at her own pace.

Introducing Cat to Cat

This is extremely important! If cats are not introduced well, it may take months—or even years—to make amends.

- Before you bring your new cat home, set up a separate room for him—away from your current cat's favorite spot.
- When bringing your new cat home, leave new kitty in the carrier in the car for a moment while you run inside and put your current cat in a room and close the door. Then bring new kitty inside, directly to his own room. Or, have a friend/family member bring the new kitty into his room. If your current cat sees you bringing in a new kitty to the house, you become the “traitor” in their eyes.
- Cats should be kept separated for the first few days to ease the transition. This is IMPORTANT! Don't rush it!
- During the first few days, take towels, blankets, or strips of paper from the new kitty's room and set out for current kitty to smell; and vice versa. Cats react better to each other if they are first introduced by smell.
- During the first week, allow the cats to sniff and play with each other under a doorway (which they may not do—they may instead hiss at each other, which is normal).
- When hissing has minimized, place new kitty in his carrier and allow your current kitty to enter the new kitty's room. Current kitty will sniff everything out—and may ignore new kitty. Let current kitty proceed at her own pace. Repeat this a few times until current kitty seems to recognize new kitty.
- Use treats as a reward for good behavior to both cats.

- After they've had a few protected introductions, try letting both kitties roam free at the same time, but be sure to monitor them. If hissing is kept to a minimum and there appears to be no serious threat of a fight, things should be on the right track to a healthy friendship. Confine pets at night and when left unattended until you are sure they are amicable together.
- Keep both kitties' food and litter boxes separate for a few weeks until you notice both are using both areas appropriately. Then you can go back to having one food area, but be sure to keep at least 2 litter boxes for them—in fact, it is recommended you have one litter box per cat, plus one (2 cats= 3 boxes). Cats are particular about where they relieve themselves, and it's best to avoid litter box problems by providing at least two, in a lower-traffic area of your house.
- Please note that this process can take anywhere from a few days to a few months—it all depends on the personalities of your cats. But over time, it tends to work out. With patience, your kitties should become great buddies, playmates and companions!

Introducing Dog to Dog

- Introduce dogs on leash in neutral environment. This should be done at least twice. Keep your arm loose, if you're tense, the dog will pick up on that. It's ok to let them sniff each other, as it's the canine way of shaking hands.
- Introduce dogs on leash in their yard and then in the house.
- ** very important! Feed dogs separately (either separated in a crate or in a small room) and be cautious with rawhides, treats and toys to avoid the possibility of toy/food aggression. It may be best to treat while they're in separate locations to eliminate this possibility.
- Keep dogs separated at night and when left unattended.
- Make sure you spend quality time with each pet, and recognize good behavior.

Introducing Dog to Cat

- Introduce the leashed dog to the cat sitting on a high surface, to allow it to look down on the dog. Do not force your cat/ dog to approach the other pet. This may take several minutes or more.
 - Do not allow the dog to chase the cat. If the dog gets excited, bring him to another room to allow him to calm down.
 - If the dog lunges at the kitty, use obedience commands to bring your dog's focus back to you (and away from the cat), say in a firm voice "LEAVE IT" or "NOT KITTY!" If your dog listens- even for a moment- be generous with verbal praise, treats, and affection. You want to make it very clear when your dog does what you want.
- If she bothers the cat, she gets corrected; if she focuses on you, she gets attention and happy talk.
- You may want to keep your dog on a leash while in the house, to allow for easy correction if he starts to chase after the cat. Be sure to clip the handle of the leash, so it doesn't get caught on household items. Remember, once the dog has learned to chase the cat, it will be difficult to change that behavior- your dog sees this as a fun game; prevention is key!
 - Provide a safe place for the cat to access its food and water, away from the dog. Cat food isn't good for your dog!
 - Gate off the room/area with the litter box so only the cat has access.
 - Confine the pets at night and when left unattended for periods of time, until the dog has shown no interest in chasing the cat.

Your dog and cat may take several months to get acquainted, and they may only learn to tolerate each other, or they may become the best of friends.

Be patient and realize this is not an overnight process. In the meantime, enjoy your pets and be sure to spend quality time with them individually!

Congratulations on adopting your new pet!