



# Cat and Dog Households

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There can often be challenges in multi-species households, especially if you're bringing home a new animal with little experience with other species. Cats and dogs have different forms of communication and different perceptions of each other. Below are some tips and tricks to start your introductions off right, and encourage a harmonious household. While these tips can help, some animals may do best in a home without the other species. If you are ever concerned about the safety of your animals, please contact a certified animal trainer to help.

## What is that smell?

When you enter your house with a new pet, your other pet is likely already aware that there is a new creature in their home. Separating them by a door until you can give them a proper introduction is best, but you can also help ease into the introduction by rubbing both animals down with a towel, and letting the other animal smell it.



## First Impressions can mean a lot

During the initial greeting between your animals, it's best to have your dog contained and under control to prevent any chasing or injuries to your cat. Placing your dog in a crate with something yummy to keep his attention is a great option, or keep your dog on leash. Allow your cat to enter the room (without forcing them) and explore near your dog.

## Positive Experiences

Having your dog relax with a nice chew toy or puzzle feeder while your cat gets some yummy canned food on the other side of the room is a wonderful way to encourage calm behaviors in the same room together. Interactions like this ensure that pets are not too focused on one another, but still enjoying the interactions.

## Reward and Encourage Calm Behaviors

...from both animals. While play between different species can be very cute, it is rare that cats and dogs enjoy being wrestling buddies. Play between dogs and cats can also be very risky for both parties, even if injuries are just accidental. Encourage and reward both of your pets for being calm around each other, especially in the initial stages of acclimation. Work on your stays and a "place" behavior with your dog and save any acrobatic kitty play for a time when they are separate.



## Create Escape Routes

Using baby gates (there are even ones with cat doors!) to give your cat a quick way to escape conflict is always a great idea. They can quickly jump or climb the gate to create distance from the dog. Sturdy shelves, a laundry room, or a bedroom can also provide your cat with a break from the dogs if they feel like they need one. While your animals are getting to know each other we do not recommend that you rely on a baby gate to keep them separate while you are away. Always keep them in different rooms when you cannot supervise until you have confidence that your pets will interact safely.



## Teach your dog to respect kitty things

Never allow your dog to eat from cat bowls, chew cat toys or towers or explore a litter box. All these things are VERY fun for dogs and they will often repeat the behavior once they learn it. Litter boxes should be safe and secure away from your dog, not only so that your pup doesn't snack on cat box contents, but so your cat feels safe entering and exiting their litter box. Food and water for cats should be kept separate and safe as well. While cat toys can often look like dog toys, they present a choking hazard for large dogs, so if you catch your dog chewing on a cat toy, calmly ask them to bring it to you and replace it with an appropriate dog toy or a treat.

## Concerns

Even if your dog has a history of being good with cats, slow introductions are always safer than risking a bad introduction. Some dogs may be great with the cat in their home but chase cats in the yard. Cats may have grown up with dogs in their home, but view strange dogs as threats and become defensive. Prey drive is natural in both cats and dogs, but the extent of prey drive dogs have can vary greatly. Even if your dog or cat has a history of being friendly with some other species it's better to be cautious. Always opt for safety!

