



# Introducing Dogs and Cats

The best long-term results for a dog and cat introduction are to take your time and go through a step by step process of slowly acclimating the animals. **The dog and cat/s should not meet or see each other for at least a day so that the dog has time to get used to the new house and the scent of the cat.** To give your cats a break and for them to also acclimate to the smell of the new dog, you can rotate “free” time in the house by kenneling or putting your dog in a secured closed off room and then allowing the cats loose in the house. If you have multiple dogs, you should do this with them individually. Multiple dogs can overwhelm a cat and create a “pack mentality” in the dogs that could make introductions extremely difficult.

## Getting Started

It is best for both animals to do several short 15-30 minute “introduction sessions” a day.

1. Grab some stinky treats, put your dog on leash and bring the cat into the same room using crate or baby gate to separate
2. Reward your dog with food for staying calm while the cat is visible across the room. Do not move the dog any closer until you’re able to get your dog's attention in the presence of the cat
3. Reward the dog any time they look away from the cat and especially if the dog looks at you
4. If the dog lunges or gets over excited, say “no” or “uh-uh” and back away or put them up. Be sure to reward your dog if they choose a calmer behavior afterwards. Your dog can look at the cat but should be heavily rewarded for choosing to look away from the cat
5. If your dog is showing appropriate/ calm behaviors from across the room, begin to move closer and repeat the process. Only choose to move closer after your dog has successfully shown only positive behaviors at the previous distance 3 sessions in a row

## If the first steps were successful:

Assuming your new dog is remaining calm around the cat and you have moved closer in proximity to the cat in the crate or on the other side of a baby gate, you will start these exercises over again with the cat out of the crate or baby gate.

1. Start with your dog on leash across the room with the cat loose on the other side. This will look different to your dog since the cat can move more freely and normally
2. A common trigger for dogs is when the cat runs across the room so be sure to heavily reward your dog if the cat does move quickly or jumps up on something and your dog remains calm
3. Work up to a closer proximity to the cat but not allowing the cat to approach the dog or for the dog to have access to the cat

If the dog is doing well on leash and is responsive to you around the cat, you can try them loose. Keep a leash on your dog but allow it to drag on the ground beside them like an extended handle that you can step on or quickly pick up if you need to interrupt your dog. Allow your cat to give appropriate warnings like hissing or swatting to indicate that he needs space. Your dog should respond to this by moving away, reward him when he does this. If your dog does not understand the cat’s warning or thinks that it is play, help your dog by calling or guiding him away by the dragging leash. Continue to reward your dog for relaxed behavior and for any time that your dog looks at the cat but chooses to look/move away.

## Notes:

Even dogs that respect cats indoors may chase or lunge toward cats outdoors so be very careful having your dog and cats in the backyard together. New dogs and cats should not be left alone together for at least the first 6 months you have the dog. You are still getting to know your new dog and what he/she will do in every circumstance. Every animal might have a different reaction to the other, so please be mindful and aware of your animal’s comfort level.