

INTRODUCING CATS & DOGS



Are These Pets a Match?

Some dogs and cats get along easily. Others need a careful dog-cat introduction. And sadly, a small number of dogs and cats may never learn to get along. Before thinking about how to introduce a dog to a cat, it's important to take an objective look at your cats and dogs to determine if introducing them is a good idea. Consider factors like dog-breed/size, socialization history, & energy levels.

Before allowing dog and cat interactions, familiarize yourself with canine and feline body language.

Understanding your pets' body language will help you spot signs of over-excitement or fear early, so you can step in with a distraction or separate the pets when necessary.

A few signs that your cat is feeling threatened:

Crouching, Arched Back, Tucked Tail, Ears
Flattened Down, Facing Sideways (Ready to Run),
Hiding, Hissing

A few signs that your dog is feeling threatened:

Lip Licking, Looking Away from Cat,
One Paw Raised, Yawning,
Tucked Tail, Ears Back, Growling

IMPORTANT: If either of your pets is stiff and staring directly at the other, they may be about to attack.

1. Begin by Keeping Your Cat and Dog Separate

It might seem counterintuitive, but at the beginning of this process, keep your pets apart. Divide your home into a “cat area” and a “dog area,” so each pet has their own space. This will help them both establish a sense of security in your home, which will help get introductions off on the right foot. Give your pets a day or two to get used to their new space before moving on to the next step. (This is especially important for cats.)



2. Start a Scent Exchange

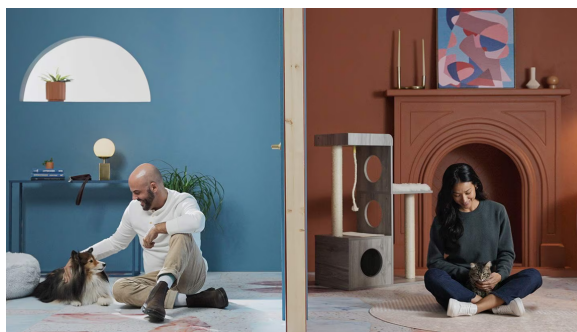
Place towels in your pets' beds or other areas where the dog and cat sleep. Each day, switch the towels so the cat sleeps on the towel the dog used the previous day, and vice versa. This will help both pets get used to each other's smells.

3. Play With the Door Closed

Now that the cat and dog are familiar with each other's smells, it's time to get them used to hearing each other. You'll need an extra helper for the next few steps!

Have one person with the cat on one side of the closed door, and the other with the dog on the other side. Each person should do something fun with their pet. For example, you could do treat training with the dog, or play with a toy. For the cat, try a wand toy, or do treat training (if the cat likes treats). The idea is to get both pets enjoying themselves, while also hearing the other pet beyond the door. Keep the playtime session to no more than five minutes.

At first, each pet may be too distracted by the sound of the other pet to play or eat treats. Keep practicing once or twice a day—with the door closed and both pets having fun—until both pets stay completely focused on the game or the food the whole time.



4. Let Them See Each Other

Using a pet gate or a glass/screen door — cover with a towel/blanket & open the solid door and repeat step three, this time with the towel-covered gate as the barrier. Once your pets are comfortable with that, move the towel a little to the side so both pets get glimpses of each other as they train or play. As long as both the cat and dog continue to stay calm and focused on the fun, you can open the towel a half-inch further at the next practice session. Don't rush, though! If either pet reacts with fear or aggression when they see the other, end the session immediately. In the next session, set up the towel so they can't see each other as clearly.

5. Remove the Barrier

Try doing the same routine with no gate between them. Use a leash to keep the dog from getting too close to the cat (imagine there's a line separating the area into halves, and use that as a guideline). If the cat chooses to get close to the dog, though, that's fine!

If your dog starts to get too interested in the cat, call your dog, ask for eye contact, or use your "leave it" cue. Move the dog with the leash if necessary.

Continue these sessions until your cat and dog remain reliably calm in each others' presence.

When it comes to how to introduce cats and dogs, remember these key points:

- Always keep your pets' safety in mind.
- Take things very slowly.
- Make sure both pets are completely calm before you move on to the next step.

Many cats and dogs can become good friends in time. The sooner you get started, the sooner they'll be able to enjoy each other's company. And if you find your dog and cat still can't get along, reach out to us at Save the Meow Meows (760)363-0720