

Introducing Your New Cat To Your Resident Dog

Dogs and cats that have had no experience with the opposite species when they were young will require some extra time to become accustomed to each other. Dogs usually want to chase and play with cats and cats are usually afraid and defensive.

- Before you start introducing the new cat to the resident dog, be sure your dog knows the commands, “sit”, “down”, and “stay”. Even if your dog already knows the commands, work with obeying the commands in return for tidbits of food. This will increase your dog’s motivation to perform, which will be necessary with a huge distraction such as a new cat.
- Introducing a new cat to a household in which a dog has already established territory can cause problems if the new cat is not set up with a minor territory of his own first. You can do this easily by keeping the new cat or kitten confined to one room with his own litter pan, bowls, bed and scratching post for one week. You should use a room in which your resident dog does not spend a great deal of time (a guest room or laundry room). It is important not to disrupt your resident dog’s main territory. It’s also important to choose a room the new cat will always enjoy. A basement or attic room that is not used by the family will not have the lasting effect necessary.
- Feed the cat and the dog near the door on their respective side of the door. Keep far enough away from the door, however, so neither is uncomfortable eating with the other animal so near.
- Trade sleeping blankets to allow each to become more accustomed to the other’s scent.
- While your new cat is in his new room, visit as often as you like but the door must be kept closed so that your dog and the new cat do not meet. They will know about each other by sound and scent. They may even want to check each other out. However, if you hope to have a long term relationship develop between the two, a week of isolation is a small price to pay.
- Once the cat and dog have established their territories, remember: after one week, you should take the new cat in a carrier to another part of the house and allow your dog to explore the room in which the cat has been staying. After a period of time, say 15 minutes, put the cat and dog back on their respective sides of the door for one more day.

- After a day or two, when the animals have become more comfortable with each other's scents, you may want to leave the door to the new cat's room ajar. Also, put up a baby gate to the cat's room to prevent the dog from entering the room. This will give your new cat a secure place to build a relationship with the dog over time. Ignore the cat and dog. You may hear hissing and even growling; ignore it as long as the cat is obviously safe. If you are intent upon watching and overseeing the cat and dog's interaction, it will increase the intensity of the introduction. This can have a bad influence on the first interactions. Do your best to act uninterested. In a few days, the cat and dog will have worked out a schedule so that they share some time together and spend some time apart.



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