

INTRODUCING CATS AND DOGS



Bringing cats and dogs together requires patience, planning, common sense and a little diplomacy on your part to ensure that things run smoothly. Here are some suggestions to help with the transition:

Introduce your new pet to your existing pet (or pets) gradually. Full and immediate access doesn't always work well.

Be respectful of the existing pet's routine and try not to alter it too much. Remember that physical space is important to cats and social space is important to dogs.

Try to spend quality time with each pet separately before their first introduction.

Confine the new cat or dog in a separate room of the house for a while so the animals cannot see each other. Their sounds and smells will generate enough curiosity without direct confrontation upon arrival.

Allow the animals to rub their scents on nearby objects and then offer these objects to the stranger on the other side of the door for inspection.

Take some of the new animal's bedding and offer it to the resident cat or dog. Rub the animals with bath towels and then exchange the towels. It is sort of like exchanging photographs in advance of a blind date.

Once the cat and the dog realize that they are not the only four-legged members of the family, they may spend a lot of time pawing at each other underneath a closed door. This limited contact allows them to get to know each other a little.

Once they have become familiar with their territory, you can start to expose them to each other visually. You should focus on controlling the actions of the dog. Keep your dog on leash during closer introductions, and lavish praise and treats on your dog for neutral or positive behavior.

Don't be surprised when your dog runs away if he is swatted or hissed at by the cat. They have an interesting way of communicating. A little growling or hissing is perfectly normal during an introduction and should not be discouraged.

Consider raising the cat food and water bowls onto the counter so the dog can't invade that space, or use a baby gate to keep the dog away when the cats are eating. Likewise, keep the cats away while the dog is eating until everyone is comfortable.

Remember that cat droppings in the litter box make for interesting "treats" for some dogs. Consider putting up a gate so the dog can't get to the litter box, but the cats can jump over, or cover the litter box opening so the dog can't get in.

The Humane Society staff is available to assist you with this introduction and any other questions you might have.

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