

Introducing Your New Cat to Your Other Pets

Cat to Cat Introductions

It's important to have realistic expectations when introducing a new pet to a resident pet. Some cats are more social than other cats. For example, an eight-year-old cat that has never been around other animals may never learn to share her territory (and her people) with other pets in the household. However, an eight-week-old kitten separated from her mom and littermates for the first time, might prefer to have a cat or dog companion. Cats are territorial and need to be introduced to other animals very slowly in order to give them time to get used to each other before there is a face-to-face confrontation. Slow introductions help prevent fearful and aggressive problems from developing. PLEASE NOTE: When you introduce pets to each other, one of them may send "play" signals which can be misinterpreted by the other pet. If those signals are interpreted as aggression by one animal, then you should handle the situation as "aggressive."

Confinement

Confine your new cat to one medium-sized room with her litter box, food, water and a bed. Feed your resident pets and the newcomer on each side of the door to this room. This will help all of them to associate something enjoyable (eating!) with each other's smells. Don't put the food so close to the door that the animals are too upset by each other's presence to eat. Gradually move the dishes closer to the door until your pets can eat calmly, directly on either side of the door. Next, use two doorstops to prop open the door just enough to allow the animals to see each other, and repeat the whole process.

Swap Scents

Switch sleeping blankets or beds between your new cat and your resident animals so they have a chance to become accustomed to each other's scent. Rub a towel on one animal and put it underneath the food dish of another animal. You should do this with each animal in the house.

Switch Living Areas

Once your new cat is using her litter box and eating regularly while confined, let her have free time in the house while confining your other animals to the new cat's room. This switch provides another way for the animals to experience each other's scents without a face-to-face meeting. It also allows the newcomer to become familiar with her new surroundings without being frightened by the other animals.

Avoid Fearful And Aggressive Meetings

Avoid any interactions between your pets that result in either fearful or aggressive behavior. If these responses are allowed to become a habit, they can be difficult to change. It's better to introduce your pets to each other so gradually that neither animal becomes afraid or aggressive. You can expect mild forms of these behaviors, but don't give them the opportunity to intensify. If either animal becomes fearful or aggressive, separate them, and start over with the introduction process in a series of very small, gradual steps, as outlined above.

Factors to Consider

- If you are thinking of getting a kitten to keep an older cat company, you might want to consider two kittens. They will be able to keep each other company while the older cat learns to love them.
- If you already have more than one cat, use the "alpha cat" for preliminary introductions. Once he/she accepts the newcomer, the other resident cats will quickly fall in line.
- Lots of snuggle-time and attention is indicated for all cats concerned during this period. Remember, the prime goal is to get them to associate pleasure with the presence of each other.
- If possible, ask a friend to deliver the new cat to your home, in her cage. You can act nonchalant, as if it's no big deal, then later let your resident cat(s) think it's their idea to welcome the newcomer.

Source:

- <http://www.sspca.org/Cats/Introducing.html>
- <http://cats.about.com/cs/catmanagement101/a/introducecats.htm>

Cat-to-Dog Introductions

You'll need to be even more careful when introducing a dog and a cat to one another. A dog can seriously injure and even kill a cat very easily, even if they're only playing—all it takes is one quick shake to break the cat's neck. Some dogs have such a high prey drive they should never be left alone with a cat. Dogs usually want to chase and play with cats, and cats usually become afraid and defensive. Use the techniques described above to begin introducing your new cat to your resident dog.

Practice Obedience

If your dog doesn't already know the commands "sit," "down," "come," and "stay," begin working on them right away. Small pieces of food will increase your dog's motivation to perform, which will be necessary in the presence of a strong distraction such as a new cat. Even if your dog already knows these commands, work to reinforce these commands in return for a tidbit.

Controlled Meeting

After your new cat and resident dog have become comfortable eating on opposite sides of the door and have been exposed to each other's scents as described above, you can attempt a face-to-face introduction in a controlled manner. Put your dog's leash on and have him either sit or lie down and stay for treats. Ask another family member or friend to enter the room and quietly sit down next to your new cat, but don't ask them to physically restrain her. Have this person offer your cat some special pieces of food. At first, the cat and the dog should be on opposite sides of the room. Lots of short visits are better than a few long visits. Don't drag out the visit so long that the dog becomes uncontrollable. Repeat this step several times until both the cat and dog are tolerating each other's presence without fear, aggression, or other undesirable behavior.

Let Your Cat Go

Next, allow your cat some freedom to explore your dog at her own pace, with the dog still on-leash and in a "down-stay." Meanwhile, keep giving your dog treats and praise for his calm behavior. If your dog gets up from his "stay" position, he should be repositioned with a treat lure, and praised and rewarded for obeying the "stay" command. If your cat runs away or becomes aggressive, you're progressing too fast. Go back to the previous introduction steps.

Positive Reinforcement

Although your dog must be taught that chasing or being rough with your cat is unacceptable behavior, he must also be taught just what is appropriate, and be rewarded for those behaviors, such as sitting, coming when called, or lying down in return for a treat. If your dog is always punished when your cat is around, and never has "good things" happen in the cat's presence, your dog may redirect aggression toward the cat.

Directly Supervise All Interactions between Your Dog and Cat

You may want to keep your dog at your side and on-leash whenever your cat is free in the house during the introduction process. Be sure that your cat has an escape route and a place to hide. And until you're certain your cat will be safe, be sure to keep the two separated when you aren't home.

Precautions

It's no surprise that dogs like to eat cat food, so you'll need to keep the cat's food out of your dog's reach (in a closet or on a high shelf). It's not uncommon for dogs to eat cat feces as well, and though there are no real health hazards involved, it's probably distasteful to you and it may upset your cat. Of course, attempts to keep your dog out of the litter box by "booby trapping" it will also keep your cat away as well. Punishment after the fact will not change your dog's behavior. The best solution is to place the litter box where your dog can't access it, for example: behind a baby gate; in a closet with the door propped open just wide enough for your cat; or inside a tall, topless cardboard box with easy access for your cat.

Kittens and Puppies

Because they're so much smaller, kittens are in more danger of being injured or killed by a young energetic dog, or by a predatory dog. A kitten will need to be kept separate from an especially energetic dog until she is fully grown, except for periods of supervised interaction to enable the animals to get to know each other. Even after the cat is fully grown, she may not be able to be safely left alone with the dog. Usually, a well-socialized cat will be able to keep a puppy in his place, but some cats don't have enough confidence to do this. If you have an especially shy cat, you might need to keep her separated from your puppy until he matures enough to have more self-control.

Source:

- http://www.hsus.org/pets/pet_care/our_pets_for_life_program/cat_behavior_tip_sheets/introducing_pets_to_a_new_cat.html