

introducing dogs and cats

dog training basics

Cats and dogs don't have to be mortal enemies. Although a few dogs may never truly be safe around cats, properly introducing your dog and cat will go a long way toward bringing peace to your household.

How training works:

Proper training is essential for a long, happy and safe relationship with your dog, setting the foundation to ensure your dog stays physically fit, mentally alert, socially engaged and emotionally happy. To make dog training an enjoyable and fulfilling activity, a great choice is to use a positive reinforcement approach that is rewards-based, fun and effective.

Dog training based on using positive reinforcement helps pet parents understand how dogs think, learn and communicate. In turn, the pet parents will understand how to encourage and reward appropriate and polite dog behaviors for real-life situations. This builds and nurtures the bond between the pet parent and their dog.

It is scientifically proven that animals will learn a new behavior faster and more successfully if they are allowed to voluntarily participate in the learning process and are rewarded for correct behaviors. Families have the best relationships with their dogs if they act as kind, benevolent influences for the family and help their dogs understand their role in the household. Dogs feel safest and most confident knowing their pet parents are making the decisions and setting boundaries. Puppies that work for all the good things in life are more confident, attentive, polite, respectful and connected to their family.



Developed with and approved by a qualified veterinarian.

Know your dog:

Dogs fall into one of three categories when meeting a new cat:

- ❑ They ignore the cat completely
- ❑ They are very excited and interested at first, but learn to get along with the cat or quickly become bored with it
- ❑ They never quit chasing the cat and may even hurt it

Dogs that fall into the third category should always be supervised when kept in homes with cats. Certain breeds, such as sight hounds (greyhounds, Afghan hounds, etc.) and some terriers, may generally fall into the third category, although some individuals may be trustworthy.

Before the introductions:

If you are bringing a new dog or puppy into a home with a cat, make changes in the cat's environment well in advance of the dog's arrival. This way, your cat won't blame your dog for what your cat sees as unnecessary upheaval. For instance: move your cat's bowls onto a counter or the washing machine where your new dog can't reach them, as dogs may be very attracted to cat food. They may also be attracted to cat feces. Make certain that both the cat's food dish and litter box are well out of your new dog's reach, but still accessible to your cat. Your cat won't get as stressed if these changes in their surroundings occur gradually.

If you are bringing a new kitten or cat into your dog's home, get the supplies for your cat or kitten in advance and teach your dog that these items are off-limits. Your cat will need a safe spot up high where they can get away from your dog and watch what's going on. This could be on top of a counter, dresser or cat tree. Once your cat is comfortable watching from a distance, they will gradually get curious and come down to investigate. Do not try to rush this process. Your cat's comfort depends on being able to adjust at their own pace.

The homecoming and introduction:

When you first bring your new dog or cat home, confine your new pet to a private room with the door shut. Let the old and new pets sniff each other under the door. Do not allow the dog to dig at the door or to stand and bark constantly. Place towels or beds that smell like the cat in the dog's area, and vice-versa. When your dog is outside, allow your cat to roam your dog's area, investigating your dog's scent. Return your cat to their own area before your dog comes back in. Then your dog will be able to smell the scent your cat left in your dog's area.

As a safety measure, before your cat meets your dog, be sure to trim your cat's nails to avoid injury if your cat becomes aggressive.

For their first real face-to-face, minimize stress by allowing your cat to roam free. Your cat will set the tone. Keep your dog on-leash or secured behind a sturdy gate. This lets them see each other and possibly touch in a controlled and safe way. If your dog has a negative reaction to your cat while on-leash, tell your dog to "Leave it" and redirect your dog's behavior using a toy or treat for the proper response to a cue such as "Sit" or "Lie down."

Have treats ready. When your cat realizes your dog is OK, give your cat a treat.

Also acknowledge your dog's good behavior and reinforce it by also giving your dog a treat. Repeat this activity daily until you feel confident that the two pets can safely be around each other and have adjusted to the new dynamics of your home.

Be patient. Your dog and cat accepting one another could take anywhere from just a few days to a few months.

Never leave newly introduced pets unsupervised until you're certain that each pet is accepting of the other.

If you need further help introducing your cat to family pets, seek advice from your veterinarian or a certified animal behaviorist.

Note: The information on this Care Sheet is not a substitute for veterinary care. If you need additional information, please refer to the above sources or contact your veterinarian as appropriate.