

# How to Introduce Your Cat to Pets

The Best Way to Introduce Your Two Cats

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gZrwcoiy\\_gY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gZrwcoiy_gY)

## Introducing Cats – Dogs

By: Jackson Galaxy

There are some cornerstone thoughts to remember when introducing dogs to cats in a new living arrangement. These revolve around the rather simplistic thought that they are different species. They don't share the same set of body language postures, nor the same social structure. Of course, if either animal was exposed to the other species during their "critical phase" of social development, that may give them an advantage in knowing what to expect from the other. On the other hand, cats will never be pack hunters and dogs will never be as confident as cats when in solitary situations. It's just the nature of the beast! If you have the opportunity, try to establish compatibility before ever bringing your new companion home. Let's say that you are bringing a cat home to your resident dog (the information in this article can be used in the converse situation as well). If you are adopting from a shelter, bring your dog with you for a meeting with potential adoptees. Most shelters these days encourage this practice; many insist on it. This will give you a rough idea of how much work will lay in front of you, not just in terms of the trepidation factor between the two, but the amount of extra training work that might have to go into your relationship with your dog.

Once home, the introduction process has to be as slow and methodical as possible. The mindset of "letting them work it out," while it may have worked for some, is by and large not only impractical, but from personal experience, inhumane. We'll touch on that more a bit later. The first step is to establish a base camp for your newcomer. Please read the article on setting up [base camp](#) before continuing .

Now that your new friend has a temporary place to call home, it's time to move on to the rules of engagement. As indicated above, every step of the meeting will be controlled. Introducing dog to cat, at least at first, will not be much different than cat to cat, despite all of the cornerstone differences mentioned. Scent before sight is how they will get to know, and begin to trust, one another. The rules of engagement are outlined in the article about [introducing one cat to another](#). As you are working on opposite side of the door feeding, as well as scent and site swapping, remember to reward both parties for good behavior anywhere near the presence of the other. They need to know that good things will always happen when the scent or, in the future, the sight of the other is on their radar.

While working these first steps, it is smart to practice training with your dog. Your dog needs to be well trained enough to reliably sit or stay when asked, even if the cat dashes across the room. This point becomes even more important when you take into consideration how many dogs you have and what their breeds might be. These factors might kick up the “pack factor” that extra notch and lead to a chase, which is one thing we want to avoid.

It could be a week or two, it could be longer—only you will know for sure. In either case, when the time is right, start attempting short, controlled, open-room meets. Have plenty of food treats on hand for both cat and dog, as we will be positively reinforcing their behavior as we go along. This is a two-person job; if you live alone, bribe a friend or family member to come over for these sessions, as it is infinitely frustrating and virtually impossible to do it alone. Have the dog on leash; if you’re not 100% sure about your dog’s chase reaction, it would be a good idea to keep the leash on at all times the dog and cat are freely exposed to one another so that you can at the very least foot the leash, prevent an escalation and correct the behavior. Try to do this meet in the largest room of your home. Have the dog in one end, already in the room and in a down–stay. Distract the dog by just talking to him/her, intermittently rewarding for keeping the stay position.

It’s better to try to lure your cat into the meet room from base camp rather than carry him or her. Use an interactive toy, praise and treats to get her within eyeshot of the dog. Make sure that the cat is positioned in the room with a well-established escape route. The idea at this point is to get the two in the same physical space and ignoring one another’s presence for as long as possible. Lots of short sessions are better than pushing either animal to their energetic breaking point and having either an incident or just needing to correct behavior over and over. In the big picture, it’s much more desirable to reward the good than correct the bad. Going back to one of the original tenets of positive reinforcement, good things must happen in the presence of the other animal for the likelihood of our desired behavior recurring. This way, the dog will learn the rules of engagement in a much more positive light, not constantly being punished around the cat, which could lead to redirected aggression onto the newcomer.

Once these sessions are predictable in length and temperament, which again, may be days or weeks, go slowly and on the schedule of your animals, it’s time to let your cat free from base camp. For the time being, keep the cat’s key belongings (litterbox and dishes) in the base camp room while spreading out beds and blankets to other parts of the house to increase the cat’s sense of territorial security. Until you’re absolutely certain that the introduction has succeeded and the cat is safe, physically separate cat and dog when you’re not around to supervise their interaction. Once again, there is no timetable on this; trust your gut.

Some warnings, a section we can call “Space Invaders.” Dogs generally love to eat cat food, and, yes, cat poop. Both acts can have disastrous behavioral backlashes from the cat. Not only are these acts the worst kind invasion on cat territory imaginable, but also if the dog happens to nose into the box when the cat is using it, that constitutes ambush. Either one of these scenarios can easily lead to a lack in confidence in the litterbox by the cat, and an ensuing preference to use someplace else where they’ll have a better view to see if the dog is coming.

Solve this problem before it starts by raising the level of the food and water dish to where only the cat can reach it. Similarly, if the litterbox needs to be behind a baby gate, or you need to install a cat door in a closet door, so be it. Just remember that ambush can happen outside that cat door as well. Your dog can be trained not to lie in wait for the cat to come out of his or her litterbox area. You'll save a lot of time and frustration cleaning up cat urine from your carpet, couch or bed by being proactive in this area. Also remember, booby-trapping the litterbox so that the dog doesn't get into it will not work; the cat will just avoid it as thoroughly.

On the other end of the space invaders spectrum, be very careful about cats who decide to nose in on the dog's food. We've all heard cute stories about cats who come into a home and take over the dog's food bowl, toys or bed and the dog just learns to share. I've unfortunately had to deal with adopting out cats into homes with dogs, having the guardians let them "work it out" in this manner, and receiving a mangled, dead cat back at the shelter the next day. Gruesome, but all too often true. You may think you know your dog, but depending on its life experience, their breed, and its general temperament, only one innocent event could make them snap. One woman came home and found that three of her cats had evidently been chased into the bathroom by the dog, where they were cornered, then brutally slaughtered, by their own trusted friend — a terrier who had lived peaceably with them their whole lives. The distraught guardian never knew what set the dog off. And the terrier himself was the final victim, when he was subsequently euthanized for his acts. So take as many precautions as you can, especially around feeding time.

With dogs of breeds who have been selectively bred for hunting, chasing, protecting or aggressive action, including terriers, sighthounds, huskies, herding, working, and hunting breeds, it is prudent to make sure there are several totally dog-proof escape routes for the cat should it be pursued at any point. For every "in" make sure there's an "out," or provide a small entry or high place that the cat can access easily but the dog can't get to. Dogs with a high prey drive may never be trustworthy around cats and must be leashed at all times in the cat's presence.

Additionally, consider flower essences to help both (or all) animals get through the initial introduction period with the least amount of stress and anxiety. [Spirit Essences](#) has many formulas to choose from, depending on the personalities involved, and the smoothness of the introduction process. Some choices to look at are our best-selling three formula sets, [Ultimate Changing Times](#), and [Ultimate Peacemaker](#).

All of these steps may seem a bit overwhelming at first, but it is all well worth it. You just took the step of holding a new life in your family's hand. This is just an outline of a few weeks to a few months towards ensuring that life is a happy, well-adjusted one. And, of course, ensuring the relative happiness and confidence of the life or lives that have been interrupted by your newcomer. Ahh, one big happy...