

Can Cats and Dogs be friends?

Jackson Galaxy <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rxlnrRQLWmM>

Cats Protection League How to introduce cats to dogs

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XTRjCFm2tUE>

**Clicker training could be a great tool to help introduce a cat and dog. You can click and treat the dog for a relaxed body posture or for turning their attention to you and if they get tense and start staring fixedly at the cat, you can divert their attention, break the stare and then click and reward.*



Think and prepare



If you have a dog and are looking to bring a cat into your home you need to consider the age, personality, size and reactivity of your dog. If they are large and/or have been allowed to play rough, you should adopt a robust adult cat rather than a kitten and if your dog has lots of enthusiasm look for a confident cat. You have to be confident that you can control your dog – they need to be

trained to “Sit, Down Stay” and you need to be able to calm them down quickly. If this is not the case then you need to delay getting a cat until your dog is trained to obey you. This is the case even if your dog has been OK with other cats or you think generally they will be OK. You need to make sure that you are creating the best chance for a positive outcome.

If you attempt to simply put a cat and dog together to “work it out” they could be friends immediately or it might take them a while to get to know each other. Much worse though, you could be creating a stressful, dangerous and potentially deadly situation and it’s not worth the risk.

You’ve only got one chance to make a first impression!

Manage your own expectations

It is not always the case that your cat and dog will end up being cosy or licking each other. This may be what you’re aiming for or expecting but your definition of happiness is not theirs and they need to decide. What matters to them is that they feel safe around each other and that they know what the outcome will be every time they interact. In their world it means that they can be together in the same room and know that they’re not going to get into a fight.

Introduce them to each other gradually

Dogs and cats have different motivations - dogs have a higher prey drive and are more into pleasing you, and cats are more defensive by nature.

Before you begin,

- Clip your cat’s nails to reduce any potential damage
- Take your dog for a good walk or engage in playtime so they are more relaxed and not excited
- Install your cat in their own safe room where they can’t see the dog
- **Introduce by smell.** Try scent swapping by rubbing a clean cloth or sock on the scent glands of the cat (cheeks and forehead). Then rub another clean cloth/sock on the scent glands of the dog (armpits). Swap the cloths around and place them in the vicinity of each animal, far enough away so they can choose whether to approach or avoid the cloth. Top up the scents every day.



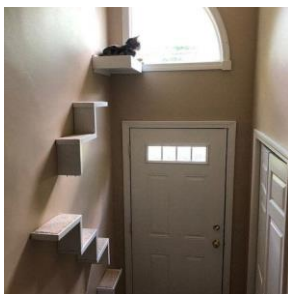
If you can, enlist the help of someone else so that there is a person sitting in the cat’s room and someone with the dog on a lead outside the room

- Sit the dog outside the closed door of the room on a lead and reward them with treats and praise when they focus on you and don’t pay any attention to the door of the cat’s safe room. You can also play with some toys in this area. If the dog is not comfortable or distracted by the smell coming from the room, move them further away, then, as they become more comfortable, move a few inches closer again. If the cat shows signs of stress move the dog further away and reward the cat when it relaxes

- Move on to feed them both on either side of the closed door so they can smell each other as they eat. This way they will start to understand that the other animal doesn't pose a threat and good things happen when they're around
- **Introduce by sight.** If you can, move the cat to safety on one side of a glass barrier such as a door and keep the dog on a lead on the other side. Allow them to choose whether to pay any attention to each other and if they stay calm reward them with a treat. Do this little and often. If the cat is afraid when it can see the dog, give it opportunities to hide whilst checking the dog out. Don't allow either of them to hold a fixed stare on the other one as this can lead to aggression
- If all is going well install a baby gate across the door of the cat's room. Walk the dog back and forth on one side and reward them when they focus on you and follow your cues. If they lunge at the glass barrier or baby gate, growl, bark or stop walking to stare at the cat, walk them away and then back again. Gradually the dog will learn that calm behavior allows them to stay closer to the baby gate but excitable behavior means you take them away. Don't yell at the dog or jerk the lead during this process – simply walk them away from the area and try again. If they become reactive then walk away again. They'll eventually get the idea that calm behavior is the best option. Similarly if the cat shows aggression towards the dog walk the dog further away and when the cat is calmer give a reward
- You will need to do multiple, short training sessions so they slowly get used to being face to face
- Reward both of them for staying calm and relaxed in the each other's presence. If at any time the dog is aggressive towards the cat or the cat appears totally panicked or dangerously aggressive, then this might not be a safe match. If, after a while you don't think the situation has improved, make sure that neither the dog or the cat has a medical issue and then consider engaging the services of a professional trainer to make things work.



During the introduction phase keep the cat and dog separated unless you're there to supervise. Use a short lead and then a long lead with the dog until you're absolutely sure both animals are comfortable with each other. It might be an idea to only have them in the same room when you're around and separate them when you are out.



If you have a large shared living space you don't want to make your cat and dog compete for floor space. Fortunately cats aren't limited to the floor like dogs so you can modify your home to give them plenty of escape options. A tall, sturdy scratching post or other elevated area is ideal. Even after the pets have become friends, your cat might feel happier and safer if they can sometimes get away from the dog to a place that is out of reach.