

Bringing a new cat into your home/Introducing a new cat to your other pets

The key to this is....do it slowly!

We recommend that you take your new cat to your vet within 3 days of adoption for a checkup. Make sure to take the kennel card and any spay/neuter, vaccination information that the shelter has given you to the vet.

The rule of thumb with litter boxes is to have 1 more box than you have cats... best in separate rooms (or a few feet apart)/different levels of the home.

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.

Confinement

Confine your new cat to one medium-sized room (bathroom or utility room) with her litter box, food, water, scratching post (very important to start this immediately), toys (ping pong balls are great! Nothing that the cat or kitten can swallow-no feathers(child-proof items) and a bed. Remove any bath/throw rugs. 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. Rub each cat with a towel and then place the opposite towel with a treat on it for each cat, so they can experience something pleasant with the new cat smell. Next, use two doorstops to prop open the door just enough to allow the animals to see each other, and repeat the whole process. While the cat is in confinement make sure to visit often and for long periods...thus begins and cements the bonding process between you (and family members). This is also a quarantine period for the new cat...to make sure that the stress of a new home does not bring on any upper respiratory issues. If it does, then your other pets are not exposed.

Switch Living Areas

Once the 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. When it is time to start letting the cat or kitten loose to learn the new house, make sure to take or lead the kitten/cat back to the litter box every 10-20 minutes. Put the cat into the litter box...if they are not ready lead them to another room, play a bit and lead them back to the litter box again. This way they can locate their litter box from different areas of the house. If they do need to use the litter box, praise them and then go play some more.....Letting a cat loose in a "XXhundred square foot" house/apartment and expecting it to remember where its litter box is during this exciting stage of discovery is not realistic. Kittens during play are so busy (just like children) that they don't even realize they need to use the litter box until they are in a rush to use it...if they don't know where it is..... Cats and kittens will catch on very fast but they do need a bit of training.

Cat To Dog Introductions

Dogs can kill a cat very easily, even if they're only playing. All it takes is one shake and the cat's neck can break. 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. In addition:

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 using treats, have him either sit or lie down and stay. Have another family member or friend enter the room and quietly sit down next to your new cat, but don't have them physically restrain her. Have this person offer your cat some special pieces of food or catnip. 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 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 how to behave appropriately, and be rewarded for doing so, 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 on-leash and with you 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. Keep your dog and cat separated when you aren't home until you're certain your cat will be safe.

Precautions

Dogs like to eat cat food. You should keep the cat food out of your dog's reach (in a closet or on a high shelf). Eating cat feces is also a relatively common behavior in dogs. Although there are no health hazards to your dog, it's probably distasteful to you. It's also upsetting to your cat to have such an important object "invaded." Unfortunately, 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 anchored open from both sides and just wide enough for your cat; or inside a tall, topless cardboard box with easy access for your cat.

A Word About Kittens And Puppies

Because they're so much smaller, kittens are in more danger of being injured, of being 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, and even then she should never be left alone with the dog. Usually, a well-socialized cat will be able to keep a puppy in its 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.

Remember: Take it slow...to make it work...
talk to your vet for more suggestions.



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