



## Making New Friends

### Introducing Your Resident Cat to Your New Dog

Successfully introducing a dog into a home with a resident cat can take a little bit of prep work and a bit more patience. The prep work is really about dog-proofing the cat's things and making sure the cat can get a respectable distance away from the dog when it wants to. Patience is always required when adjusting to a new member of the family.

If you are looking to introduce your dog to a new cat, please see the handout '*Making New Friends - Introducing Your Resident Dog to Your New Cat.*'

### Prep Work

#### **Elevated walkways**

Providing your cat with options to move around your home, up and away from the traffic of other animals and people gives your cat a means of putting distance between itself and potential stressors.

- These pathways should not have dead ends to them where a cat can feel stuck or trapped.
- Use cat trees to begin, connect or end wall walkways.

#### **Make up a safe room for the cat**

- A safe room for your cat is simply a room that can be used to help make your cat feel safe and secure in its own home.
- A safe room gives your cat a space to go so that it can get the most distance between itself and the dog.
- It is furnished with everything your cat would need like a litter box, scratchers, bed, etc. Your cat will want familiar scents and owned objects in this room to feel safe.
- Install a baby or pet gate to go across the door to the room. This will allow the cat to get into the room but not the dog. If the dog is larger, put the gate up high enough for the cat to get under but low enough to prevent the dog from getting through.



- Avoid putting the litter box in a dead-ended space, like a closet.
- If you don't already know what one is or what is required to make one, please refer to the handout titled '*Creating a Safe Room for Your Cat.*'

### **Make the space safe for the dog**

- Move the litter box into the cat's safe room.
- Block the dog's access to the cat's bed, litter box, safe room, and window hammocks.
- Pick up all cat toys the dog could potentially swallow.

## **Welcoming a dog into a cat's home**

### **Safety First**

Before you even think about letting your dog and cat just make friends on their own, you need to take this one **necessary** safety precaution.

- **Keep your dog on a leash!**
- You have no idea how either the cat or the dog will react to each other, smelling each other's food, water bowl, toys, body, etc.
- **Do NOT** leave things to chance. You could ruin the opportunity for your cat to warm up to your dog for an extensive period or even create new behaviour problems with your cat.

### **Teach your cat the language of a dog**

Cats and dogs do not speak the same language. It will take time for them to learn from each other and with your help. This is also a great opportunity to build a bond with your dog.

- Take time to train your dog in the presence of the cat.
- Train your dog to know your voice and voice commands.
- Play with your dog around the cat but at a distance, so the cat can get a sense of the dog's energy and the sounds it makes.
- Again, the leash should remain on. It does not have to be in hand all the time but within foot reach.



- Spend time cuddling with your dog. Your cat should be able to learn how your home and dog interact with each other.

### **Teach your dog the language of your cat**

Your dog will also need some guidance to learn your cat's language.

- Block your dog from cat spaces or train the dog to stay away from those spaces. This is just a part of keeping your dog safe from your cat.
- Play with your cat, at a safe and comfortable distance, in front of the dog. Give your dog something else to focus on while play is ongoing.
- Spend time cuddling with your cat.

### **Build trust with food**

Food goes a long way when making new friends.

- Put your dog and cat on the same feeding schedule.
- Feed them within sight of each other, preferably at different levels from one another.
- Be sure the dog cannot get to the cat.
- Keep an eye on the cat to prevent it from getting too close to the dog at mealtimes.

### **Taking the leash off**

Your patience and perseverance can be rewarded by removing the leash when both the cat and the dog are expressing **consistently predictable reactions** to each other in various situations. Meaning,

- The cat should not be hissing or stressed out by the dog barking.
- Hairs on the neck of the dog or the back of the cat should not be standing on end when they see each other.
- There is no defensive posturing.

There is no time by which both the cat and dog should be getting along with each other. It is purely up to each cat, dog, and human to make things happen.



If you find you are struggling with introducing your dog to your resident cat you can always call our Behaviour Help Line at 403-723-6019 or book a consultation via our website at <https://www.calgaryhumane.ca/what-we-do/animal-training/private-consultations/>