

A GUIDE TO DOG-TO-CAT INTRODUCTIONS



Tips for Successfully Integrating a Dog and Cat into Your Home

If you've decided to have a dog and a cat in your household, here are some tips to position your pets for success together:

- Have a "safety room" (or rooms), as well as high places the cat can access but the dog cannot. Baby-gates, cat doors, and clearing high surfaces can accomplish this. It is important that the cat can retreat to regroup and relax away from the dog and then venture forward into "dog territory" at her own pace. The cat should have access to food, water and litter in this area so no interactions with the dog are forced.
- Never force the cat (or dog) into proximity by holding her, caging her, or otherwise restricting her desire to escape. This is stressful and does not help. Aside from it being inhumane, stress is a common reason for cats to break litter box training.
- Place bedding and other items that have the scent of one pet on them in the other pet's space so that each animal can become used to the scent of the other without meeting face to face.
- For the first introduction, have the dog on leash in case he starts to chase. If it seems to be going well, drop the leash and allow dog to drag it on the ground. If the interaction suddenly becomes negative you can step on the leash to prevent the dog from chasing the cat. Once the interaction seems to be going smoothly, take the leash off and supervise closely.
- If the dog is behaving in a friendly and/or cautious way, try to not intervene in their interactions, except to praise and reward the dog for his good manners.
- Interrupt any intense chasing and try to redirect the dog's attention to another activity – this is very difficult so you may be forced in future to manage the dog on-leash around the cat until you have worked out a routine or divided up the house.
- In the first few weeks, observe the trend: are things getting better or worse? Monitor interactions until there is a pattern or plateau in their relationship.
- If the dog is the newcomer, be sure to give plenty of extra attention to the cat so she does not associate this change with reduced attention and affection. If the newcomer is a cat, it's also a good idea to make sure the dog associates the new intruder with good things for him. Aim for positive associations, always.
- Dogs should not have access to the cat litter box – it is too stressful for the cat and the dog may eat cat feces and litter. Most dogs will also eat cat food the cat leaves behind – we suggest feeding cats in the cat's "safe" room or on a high surface.
- The most important thing you can do to ensure a successful introduction is to go slowly and not rush. We all want our pets to get along well, and quickly. But please remember that you are hoping and working toward a successful and happy long-term relationship. Being patient in the beginning will pay off! Rushing the introduction will often cause serious problems which may take longer to solve -- or in some cases may never be solved.

We're here to help! For assistance, please contact us:

adoptions@lawrencehumane.org

785-843-6835