

Even if your new dog or cat has never been around other animals, they can still become a great companion for your resident pets—or at least peacefully coexist! The key to success is to introduce your new pet to your home and existing animals slowly and carefully.

1. **Give Everyone a Safe Space:** Start by placing your cat and dog in separate areas of your home, where they can feel comfortable and safe without the other animal. Ensure these spaces are secure so they can't accidentally encounter each other before they're ready.
2. **Start Slow:** Allow your cat and dog to get used to the presence of the other animal in a non-threatening way. Try scent swapping (rubbing a towel on one animal and letting the other smell it) or feeding them on opposite sides of a door so they can get used to each other's scent and sounds.
3. **Keep Your Dog Focused:** Brush up on your dog's training cues. If they get too fixated or excited about the presence of the cat, give them brief viewings of the cat, and then refocus their attention on a treat or toy. This helps desensitize them to the novelty of the cat and reinforces calm behavior.
4. **Controlled Meetings:** After both animals have adjusted to each other's presence through scent swapping, attempt a face-to-face introduction in a controlled environment. Baby gates are a great way to begin visual introductions, or you can let them meet in a room. Keep your dog on a leash, ask them to sit or stay, and have a family member or friend quietly sit with your cat on the opposite side of the room. Repeat this until both pets tolerate each other's presence without fear or aggression.
5. **Let Your Cat Go:** Next, allow your cat to explore your dog at her own pace, while keeping your dog on a leash in a sit- or down-stay. Reward calm behavior from your dog with treats and praise.
6. **Positive Reinforcement:** Reward your dog for staying calm and displaying desirable behavior when around the cat. If your dog is punished when your cat is around, and never experiences positive reinforcement, they may redirect aggression toward the cat.
7. **Offer Options:** Never force your cat and dog to interact. Allow the cat to approach or avoid the dog, and provide safe spaces where the cat can observe the dog from a distance, such as a cat tree or shelf.
8. **Supervise:** Keep your dog on-leash and with you whenever your cat is free to roam during the introduction process. Make sure your cat has an escape route and a place to hide. Until you're confident that both animals can coexist peacefully, keep them separated when you aren't home.

Note: Some dogs have a strong, instinctive prey drive and may not be safely housed with small animals, including cats. Others may have a deeply-rooted fear of cats that will require gradual counterconditioning

**Additional
Resources:**

- <https://bestfriends.org/pet-care-resources/how-introduce-dog-cat>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KFHYxMkVTEc>
- <https://www.maddiesfund.org/cat-afraid-of-new-dogs.htm?p=topic1011>
- <https://www.paws.org/resources/introducing-cat-to-dog/>