

Pet to Pet Introductions

Bringing home a new animal can be stressful, but proper introductions can make a big difference in how smoothly things go. Here are some tips for introducing a new animal to both cats and resident dogs.

- Let the resident dog(s) meet the new dog on neutral territory. If possible, head to a nearby park and let them meet and walk together there. Ideally, they could walk together back to the house and into the backyard for some off leash play (after you see that everyone is calm and getting along). Starting off in the yard gives the dogs a bigger space and often less resources (to potentially guard) than the house.
- Keep them separated unless they are supervised until you are very comfortable that they are safe to be left alone together. This may be a few days or a few months or they may never be left alone together. Be especially cautious if there is a big difference in age and or size. An older dog may not tolerate a youngster wreaking havoc and there is always the potential for an accident if one is much larger than the other.
- Feed separately or closely supervise the feelings. The same goes for valuable chews and toys.
- Do lots of walking and training together. This provides opportunities for fun, while still being under control, in the presence of the other dog(s).
- Always reinforce calm, polite behaviors. Try to discourage any pushy, demanding or bullying behavior.
- If the resident pet is a cat, make sure you have plenty of places that the cat can escape to where the dog cannot reach.
- Do not let the dog chase the cat. Practice rewarding calm behavior and use a leash if necessary to keep their interactions calm. Starting by allowing them to sniff the area the other animal has been in and then sniff each other through a door are non-confrontational ways for many pets get to know each other.
- Make sure the dog is well exercised before introducing him to the cats. This will help keep the greeting as calm as possible.
- Keep the cat's food and litter box out of reach of the dog. Most dogs enjoy snacking from the cat's bowl and litter box, so it's better not to start they habit at all.

