

Many dogs and cats get along very well, especially if they've grown up with each other or have prior experience living with the other species. But it's up to you to protect both animals and set up introductions carefully so that both feel safe and have a pleasant experience getting acquainted.

- **Set up a safe place for your cat.** Your dog should not be able to access your cat's food, water and litter box. Set up a baby gate in the doorway to a room, about 6-10" off the ground, so the cat can slip under it but the dog cannot. If the two animals are close in size, you may need to set up the baby gate on the floor and provide jumping assistance (landing points) on both sides of the gate to help your cat over it.
- **Sniff through the baby gate.** Fill your pockets with treats that your dog loves, like bite-sized pieces of chicken or cheese, and treats that your cat will love as well, such as bits of meat or tuna. Walk your dog slowly by the baby gate several times each day for a couple of days. Praise and treat him for calm behavior, and then toss the cat a treat as well. This way, your cat will associate your dog with delicious treats. If your dog overreacts to your cat, distract him and get his attention focused on you by asking him to do basic obedience skills, like Sit and Down. Use delicious treats to reward him for his obedience in the presence of something as tempting and distracting as your cat! Your cat should be free to approach the baby gate to get closer to the dog or to retreat if she wants to. Reward her any time she approaches the baby gate by tossing her treats.
- **Let your cat set the pace.** If she chooses to run and hide under the furniture when you and your dog walk by, let her. It simply means your introductions will take longer—maybe weeks longer. Taking things slow will help to avoid a bad first impression. Keep in mind that cats can take months to form relationships with other animals. Never attempt to force any interactions by holding your cat, putting her into a crate or carrier or restricting her movement in any way.
- **Beyond the safe place.** If your cat doesn't seem afraid of your dog as you pass by the doorway of her room, or if she even tries to jump over or crawl under the gate, you can introduce them in your living room or other large room. Make sure your cat can get away from your dog during the introduction. She should have the freedom and room to retreat, run and hide, slip beneath a piece of furniture where the dog can't follow or jump up on something higher than the dog.
- **Keep your dog on leash.** Keep your dog with you on-leash during these introductions in the living room and for the first couple of weeks. Allow the leash to be loose, but hold onto it in case your dog starts acting inappropriately towards your cat.
- **Interrupt undesirable behavior.** Interrupt any chasing, barking or agitated behavior from your dog by using a leash to move him away from your cat. Redirect his attention to another activity or ask him to do some easy obedience skills for food rewards. Avoid scolding, yelling or jerking on your dog's leash. A positive approach is crucial because you want your dog and cat to learn a pleasant association with each other's presence. You don't want them to learn that everyone gets tense and angry and bad things happen when the cat or dog is around. Dogs are more likely to engage in chase or prey behavior when they're tense or aroused.
- **Cat corrections.** Some cats may use their claws to briefly correct a dog that may be too enthusiastic or simply too close to them. If this happens, quickly and calmly move the dog away from the cat and check to make sure neither animal is injured. Resolve to intervene faster next time so your cat doesn't feel the need to defend herself.