



Introducing a New Cat to a Resident Dog

When bringing a new cat into a home with an existing dog taking a few precautionary measures and a bit of preparation can mean the difference between a future of peaceful inter-species cohabitation and years of strife. Plopping the two down together and expecting them to work things out on their own seldom ends well.

Prior to bringing your new cat home, set up a room that will be her own private space for several weeks. A spare bedroom or home office is ideal. She should have food, water, toys bedding and a litter box. When you bring your new cat home, take her directly into the room, open the carrier and leave the room closing the door behind you. Give her a few hours of alone time to de-stress and explore the new territory. Allow your dog to sniff and investigate at the base of the door but do not allow visual access yet. Give your dog tasty, high value treats when he is near the door. You can take some of the cat's bedding out and leave it in the areas that your dog frequents and vice versa so the two can exchange smells.



Several times each day put your dog in his crate with a bully stick or Kong in a bedroom and close the door. Give the cat a few hours to explore the rest of the house. After a few days have passed put a tall baby gate in the doorway to the cat's safe room. Arm yourself with high value tasty treats and put your dog on a leash. Approach the baby gate with your dog. Feed him a jackpot of treats when he notices the cat from a distance. Keep the interaction brief and remove the dog and close the door if either animal shows fear or aggression. Continue these meetings from a distance through the gate for the next few days, rewarding the dog for just being in the presence of the cat and separating the two when necessary.

If these meetings are casual and relaxed remove the baby gate but keep the dog on a leash. Continue with the same exercise, freely dispensing treats for merely being in the presence of the cat. Again if either animal shows fear or aggression, end the meeting. Little by little you should be gradually decreasing the distance between the two and increasing the amount of time they are allowed to interact if both parties are comfortable.

Always keep the door to the cat's safe room open so that she can retreat if she's had enough. When both the cat and the dog are comfortable enough with each other that they start to ignore one another you can take the leash off your dog. It is a good idea to provide the cat with vertical escape routes such as tall furniture or cat trees to get up out of the dog's reach if necessary. It is best to not leave the two together unattended.

Tony La Russa's Animal Rescue Foundation

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