



Introducing Dogs and Cats to One Another

Information adapted from original article by the San Francisco SPCA, 2004

If you've decided to blend a dog and a cat in your household, here are some pointers:

- 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.
- For the first introduction, have the dog on leash in case he explodes into chase. If it seems to be going well, 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. Shoot for positive associations always.

- Dogs should not have access to the cat litterbox – 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.
- If you’re having difficulty, we may be able to help. Please call our main line at 919-772-2326.