

Dogs and Cats Living Peacefully Together



Many animal-loving families have more than one species living in their homes, but putting dogs and cats together can sometimes be a challenge.

CATS are naturally independent and are predators that pounce and dart at “prey” and can be seen as a challenge to the dog.

DOGS are pack animals. Some are bred to hunt, guard or retrieve game and can have a strong prey drive, meaning they instinctively chase fast-moving and furry creatures such as cats.

If you have a dog and are considering adding a cat to your household, think about the following:

- The specific character of your breed: Purebred dogs are generally predictable. For example, terriers were bred to hunt and kill vermin, scent and sight hounds to track and run down quarry, and herding breeds to control the movement of other animals. Some breeds may have higher prey drives than others. Read about your breed in detail on the AKC web site.
- The individual personality and temperament of each dog: Laid-back dogs should co-exist or get along better with cats than more active, assertive dogs.
- Age: Dogs and cats usually get along better when they are introduced at an early age, ideally within the first two-three months of life.

When introducing dogs and cats in the same home:

- Keep the two separated for the first several days.
- Let them walk around the house one at a time to allow them to get to know the other's scent.
- Let your cat in the room with the dog to explore while the dog is crated. Then do the same with the dog on a short leash in a sit-stay. Praise your dog when he is calm, friendly and focused on you.

More hints:

- Keep the two animals under complete supervision in controlled situations.
- Teach dogs that cats are off-limits by introducing the “LEAVE IT!” command. When the dog makes any movement toward the cat, tell him to “Leave it,” and praise him when his attention returns to you.
- Give both animals extra treats and attention when they are together so they associate the other with good things, not punishment.
- Keep the cat's litter box and feeding areas out of reach of the family dogs.

Take your time and be patient. Some dogs and cats may never be best friends, but they can live together!



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