



Introducing your new cat to your dog



Can opposites attract? If you give your new cat and your dog time to get to know one another, they will often learn to get along. Just let your cat set the pace and give them all the time and space they need to feel safe and secure.

Before introductions begin, make sure each animal has their own safe area away from the other. If you can, divide your home into a 'cat area' and 'dog area', ideally with a buffer area in between.

Keep in mind your new cat might choose not be friends with your dog, so be prepared to keep a permanent cat-safe area where your cat can access everything they need. Make the most of high places where your cat can observe while feeling safe.



Once your new cat feels comfortable in their area, you can slowly start introducing them to your dog following these five steps:



Step 1: Pawsitivity

A new arrival in the household can make a dog feel worried. Help your dog feel positive about the arrival of the new cat by adding more of your dog's favourite things, like more play time, walks, strokes and cuddles.



Step 2: Scent swapping

Get your new cat and your dog used to each other's scent before they see one another. Rub your dog with a cloth and place it in the cat's area, and vice versa. Repeat this over a few days, gradually rubbing the 'dog cloth' on your cat's resources (e.g., toys, food and water bowls), and vice versa.



Step 3: Investigating each other's areas

Let your pets do a little background check on each other before they meet. Allow them to explore each other's areas of the home without the other present, starting with the buffer area first if possible.



Step 4: Supervised visual contact

Start by letting your cat and dog see one another behind a physical barrier (e.g., children's safety gate). Let them choose how much visual contact they are comfortable with – don't confine or restrict them. Treats and play are great to reward them for being calm around each other. It's best to keep sessions of supervised visual contact short and stop the session while both animals are still happy. If anyone is upset, separate them and give them some space.



Step 5: Supervised physical access

It's super important to only progress to Step 5 when you think there's a very high chance that your new cat and dog will get along. Start by removing the barrier for short periods at first, putting it back up between sessions. You might want to keep your dog on a lead at first. Ideally, have two people supervise them at all times - one person watching each animal. If your new cat and dog hit it off, gradually let them spend more time together and share their happy home.

Just like any new relationship, go into it with an open mind, and be prepared that your cat and dog may or may not be compatible. They will tell you how they're feeling via their behaviour and body language, so keep your eyes peeled.