



INTRODUCING YOUR CATS AND DOGS



Did you know?

Reaching out for help early is best.

If you are worried about your pet's behaviour please contact our RSPCA NSW Behaviour Team at mail@rspcansw.org.au to speak with a qualified professional.

Introducing pets to one another takes time and patience. They will rely on you to make sure they are comfortable every step of the way.

Before following the advice below, make sure each pet has their own safe area with everything they need, completely away from the other. Some homes can easily be split into separate areas by placing a floor to ceiling pet gate in a hallway or doorway. For others, you may have to turn a bedroom into a 'cat only' space.

Some cats and dogs can learn to share a home, while others simply cannot. Getting things right from the beginning gives everyone the best chance of a happy household.

Once your pets feel comfortable in the home, you can slowly introduce them to each other following these five steps:



1: A little planning goes a long way

It's important that your dog is comfortable with equipment such as

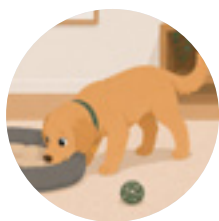
harnesses, leads and/or long lines before any face-to-face meetings; this equipment can reduce the chance of things going wrong. Ensure the cat has multiple escape routes in every room—high perches, cat trees, shelves, tunnel boxes, and hiding spots, so they can avoid the dog if they choose. By putting things in place early, you can reduce stress for everyone.



2: Scent swapping

Get your cat and dog used to each other's scent before they see one another. Swap

bedding or use two cloths (one for each animal), rub your dog with the cloth and place it in your cat's area, (away from food, litter boxes, and favorite resting places) so they can investigate at their own pace. Use another cloth to massage your cat's facial gland area (chin, lips, cheeks, forehead, and ears) and place this in your dog's area, away from their food and favourite resting places.



3: Investigating each other's areas

Let your pets explore each other's areas when the

other is absent. For example, allow the cat to roam the home while the dog is out for a walk etc., return the cat to their safe space before the dog comes back, this lets the dog pick up the cat's scent around the house without having to meet face-to-face.

Stick to a predictable daily schedule so both animals can anticipate when things will happen; consistent routines reduce stress and make gradual introductions much smoother.



4: Supervised visual contact

Start with brief, supervised visual meetings behind a solid barrier (e.g., a glass door/

flyscreen) then progress to a partial barrier such as a floor to ceiling pet gate. Let them choose how much visual contact they are comfortable with, don't make them approach one another. Give the cat high perches for safety. Treats and play are great to reward them for being calm around each other. Encourage each to engage in their own activities away from the other such as a snuffle mat for your dog and string toy play or lickmat for your cat. Keep sessions short and end while both are happy; if either becomes upset, do not allow them to see each other again until both feel calmer.



5: Supervised physical access

It's super important to only progress to step 5 when you're confident they are

likely to get along. Remove the barrier for short, supervised periods, putting it back between sessions and keep the dog on a lead/long line at first; ideally two people supervise (one per animal). Make sure that both pets can move away at any point in time. You should never make them approach one another with food, toys or touch, it must always be their choice. If your new cat and dog hit it off, gradually let them spend more time together. If all goes well, you can slowly drop the dog's lead to the floor, this allows you to quickly pick it up if something goes wrong. When you are sure it is safe, you can remove it entirely. Remember to watch your pets closely, as their body language and behaviour will tell you how they feel.

If injury occurs, separate everyone immediately and seek medical help as soon as possible.

Visit our website for more information, encouragement, inspiration, and to sign up to our community of cat lovers keeping their cats safe at home.

rspcansw.org.au/keeping-cats-safe