



## Dog to Cat Introductions

- If you've decided to introduce a dog and a cat in your household, here are some pointers:
- **Slow and steady:** a safe and proper introduction can take up to a few weeks/months. Give the dog a few days to settle into the new environment/routine before starting the introduction. **Be sure to keep your new animals separated during this time.**
- **"Safety Room"** for your cat(s). Prepare for your cat(s) to live in this room for up to a few weeks. Make sure their food, litter boxes, scratching posts, places to hide/sleep and places to get up high such as a cat tree are in the room. It is important for your cat to have access to get out of view of the dog if they choose or to get up on a high surface if they choose. Cats find safety from places up high, so it may be wise to purchase a cat tree if you do not already have one.
- **Baby gates:** Place a baby gate in the doorway of the "Safety Room". You will want to keep this here even when the door is closed. This will work as a safety net for when you have to enter and exit the room. The baby gate will also play a critical role during the introductory period. We recommend a baby gate that has a door you can open and a small cat door at the bottom that the cat can go through but the dog will not fit through.
- **High value food:** have high value food ready for both the cat and the dog. Albacore tuna and meat flavored baby food can work as a good treat for both species. Sliced hot dogs or deli meats are also another option for the dog.
- Start with as much distance as your home will allow. Begin with a short session 10-15 minutes. Begin to increase the sessions as you close the distance gap between the dog and cat(s). The goal is to have both animals nice and relaxed while they are within close proximity to one another.
- When you and the animals feel comfortable, you can start opening the door to the cat room. Always give your cat choice to come out on their own. The first few times the cat comes out of the room, keep the leash dragging on the dog. Again, always have high value food on you for the dog when the cat is around.
- For the first few introductions always keep the dog on leash in the event you need to quickly gain control of the dog.
- Be aware of both dog and cat's body language during introductions. Feed the high value treats to all animals. We want cat to equal yummy treats to the dog and dog to equal yummy treats to the cat.
- 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.

- Monitor your cats stress levels. Some signs that your cat is stressed may be change in appetite, inappropriate litter box use, constant hiding, etc. It can take weeks for a cat to acclimate to a new dog in the home. Be patient and aware of your cat's stress signals.
- 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. This is where the baby gate with a cat door at the bottom will be useful.
- If after all efforts, your new dog and cat(s) are not integrating well this is not a failure on your part. Some dogs and cats do not do well living with one another. If you have newly adopted a dog from AWLA, we will always take our dogs back. We fully understand that some dogs cannot be integrated into a home with cats.