

Dog-Cat Households - How to Introduce Your New Dog!

You are crossing the species barrier by adding another cat or dog to your household. In many cases you can find the right match for a multi-species household. It is critically important that you do everything you can to make Fido and Frisky's first weeks together good ones. The tips below will help you do just that.

HOW TO PICK THE RIGHT DOG

You do not need all of these in one pet to have a successful dog-cat household, but the more categories that your pets fit into increases your chances of success! These only are guidelines to help you make a successful match.

Factors to consider when searching for a cat-friendly dog are:

- Age:** The younger the better. Ideal would be less than 5 months of age.
- Neutered/spayed:** An altered dog will have less hormonal influence over its behavior than an intact dog.
- Breed:** Many hunting/herding breeds have a strong instinct to chase which can be dangerous for a cat who is programmed instinctively to run from danger.
- Training:** A dog who has a fool-proof "stay" or "leave it" is less risky for the cat than one who doesn't know basic obedience, or doesn't "obey" the commands in the presence of distractions
- History with Cats:** A dog with a proven peaceful history with cats gives you a better chance of a peaceful meeting with the next cat it encounters

HOW TO PICK THE RIGHT CAT

Factors to consider when searching for a dog-friendly cat are:

- Age:** Kittens often do not have a negative history with dogs and may be more likely to accept a canine companion, but any age will do if they have a positive history with dogs.
- Temperament:** A confident cat is best.
- Claws:** Non-declawed cats often feel less threatened because they have their natural first defenses intact – their claws. Declawed cats may be forced to bite a dog who invades their personal space.
- History with Dogs:** A cat who has lived with a dog may be less fearful and will better understand canine body language. They will most likely be less disturbed by this situation, which will make them less stressed when sharing a home than cats who have never met a dog in their life!

WHEN FIDO (DOG) IS THE NEW RESIDENT IN THE HOUSE

Before Fido comes home make sure you have done the following:

- ✓ Create a dog-free zone for Frisky that the dog will NEVER be allowed to invade. This is the cat's sanctuary and should have fresh water and a litterbox at minimum, but this is a good area to feed the cat too. It isn't uncommon for a dog to "raid" the litter box – which just might send Frisky over the edge!



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- ✓ Allow for an escape route to the dog-free sanctuary that is always available to Frisky.
- ✓ Especially if Fido is on the smaller side, allow for high places that Fido cannot get to as mini-sanctuaries for Frisky. These must be out of Fido's reach at all times.

When you bring Fido to meet Frisky, make sure that Fido is on leash and under control. This way, you can control any overly-enthusiastic greetings. Never allow the new dog to burst into the house and begin chasing the cat! **DO NOT** force Frisky to be close to Fido by picking him/her up and holding while you say, "see the nice puppy!" **If Frisky wants to escape, allow him/her do to so.**

GO SLOW! Slow introductions can help prevent fearful and/or aggressive problems from developing. It may take a while for Frisky to warm up to Fido. Don't force him to meet the dog. Allow the relationship to develop on his timetable. Be observant of their cat's body language, but understand that Frisky might just hide out for a few days or weeks. Become a relationship detective. Look for clues about the developing relationship between Fido and Frisky. Is it improving? Is it getting worse? Is the relationship a one-way street? This honeymoon period can take hours or weeks, but whatever your case, be prepared to display the patience of a saint while you assist Fido and Frisky in building a positive relationship.

This is a great time to work on Fido's obedience commands – "sit", "down", "stay", "leave it" and "watch me". The more solid these commands, the more control you will have over Fido's reactions to Frisky. It is imperative that you praise Fido (and Frisky) for positive and calm behavior when in each other's presence. Fido is learning even if you are not actively "training" him at that moment. Always praise calm, polite behavior when around Frisky.

If Frisky is comfortable in a large crate (preferably Fido's crate), use it! Make sure that you partition part of it off with a towel or sheet to create a mini-dog free zone inside the crate that the cat can escape to if necessary. For no more than 10 minutes, place Frisky in the crate and allow Fido to freely roam the area. Praise all calm behavior from Fido and confident behavior from Frisky. This is a great time to work on those commands with Frisky in the room – creating a positive association for Fido (calm around cat = treat for me!)

After you are feeling confident that Fido won't chase Frisky, it might be safe to leave Fido's leash attached, but let it drag on the ground so you can quickly step on it to end the chase. After you are 150% certain that Fido has no interest in chasing Frisky, they may take Frisky's leash off and allow them to roam the house together.

Always Supervise, Supervise, Supervise! Until there are several fool-proof months of off leash roaming, never leave Fido and Frisky together unsupervised. It takes only seconds for an accident to happen. When you cannot supervise, confine either one or both animals to prevent any mishaps.

No matter what happens, don't lose your cool! **PUNISHMENT WON'T WORK!** It could make things worse. If Fido, or Frisky, only experience negative things (like punishment) in the presence of the other, they are likely to associate each other with unpleasant things. So, **THINK POSITIVE!**

If there are any problems once you are home, or you simply have questions about animal behavior, contact Purrfect Paws Animal Behavior Center, LLC at 716-465-6555.