

Plan Ahead How to Introduce Your New Dog to Your Current Pets

Even with careful introductions, there may be an adjustment period after bringing a new pet home. Existing and new pets may hit it off from day one but they are just as likely to initially exhibit fear, depression or "jealousy", or they may even be mildly aggressive towards each other (all normal reactions). If you are not ready to cope with an almost inevitable (but generally temporary) adjustment period, please postpone adopting until you know you are ready and have the time.

New puppy or dog to established dog or dogs:

Puppies are more fragile than adult dogs and less able to defend themselves, so it is important that introductions be closely supervised. Some adult dogs might ignore the new puppy and give you a "WHAT IS THAT?" look. Others may lick and nurture the little one right away. Although unlikely, it is possible that an adult dog will attempt to hurt the puppy. When introducing a puppy into your household, remember that some lack respect and are too playful for more mature dogs. By using a crate, the established dog can get used to the puppy while it is crated without it jumping on them.



If you have multiple dogs, introduce the puppy to each separately so the puppy is not overwhelmed. The safest place to introduce a new dog is on neutral territory; i.e. a park, neighbor's yard or the place where you are getting the new dog. Once again, remember if you have multiple established dogs, introduce them to the new dog separately at first so the new dog is not overwhelmed.

All introductions are done while observing both dogs carefully, preferably while they are on a loose leash held by two individuals. If there is a problem, you can easily separate them which is not always easy when you are by yourself. Allow the dogs to sniff each other. Watch body language carefully; raised hackles, stiffened-legs, tail or an overall stiff demeanor besides the obvious growling/snapping could signal trouble. Play bowing (lowering the front half of the body with the forelegs splayed out) is generally considered a positive when introducing two dogs. This gesture is an invitation to play.

If all goes well after the initial meeting, put the dogs in a fenced area, with leashes dragging, and allow them to get to know each other. The dragging leashes ensure that you have something to safely grab to separate the dogs if there is a problem, which is safer than trying to grab them by the collar. Some of the most common problems between dogs in a household are usually food or toy related. It is a good idea to feed them separately (perhaps feeding the new dog in its crate for a while) and to pick up all toys until you know that they can play together with no serious territorial problems.

After a week or so, when you are confident they are getting along, you can then supervise their eating in the same room. You can move the bowls closer together over time if things continue to go well. Reintroduce toys gradually and watch carefully to ensure that everyone learns to share. Close supervision and being tuned in to body language, eye contact, etc. for potential problems are key to ensuring that disagreements are avoided during the "honeymoon period" (generally the first month or so that a new dog is in the home). (over)

If the new dog is crated when you are gone and the established dog is loose, put the crate where the loose dog cannot tease the crated one. A closed door is a great solution and leaving a radio on provides soothing background noise when you are not at home. After initial introductions, give the pets a few weeks to get acquainted with you supervising before leaving them together unsupervised. A month is an average "probation period" although this can vary considerably. Start off by leaving the house for short periods of time rather than a several hour trial period. In many instances the pack will settle down within a few days after the new dog is introduced.

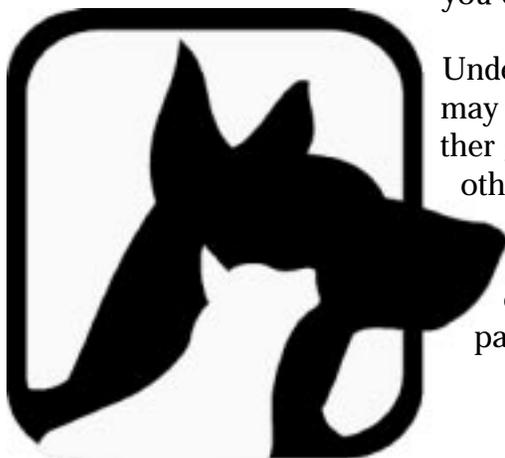
New puppy or dog to established cat or cats:

Keep in mind that not all dogs hate cats or vice versa, but they are generally, at the very least, suspicious and distrusting of each other initially. It is important to be very careful when introducing them, since each can do serious damage to the other. Approach introductions with patience (it can sometimes take several months for dogs and cats to live in harmony).

The way they are introduced initially is very important and can greatly affect the length of time until they are at ease with one another. Just putting them together at the onset and hoping for the best is a mistake and can cause major setbacks. Confine the cat to a room where it feels comfortable with food, water and litter box. Start with the door closed so the animals can sniff each other under the door. The cat will know the dog is in the house and vice versa. Do this for several days, up to a week.

Next, allow the cat and dog to see each other under your close supervision. This can be done with a heavy-duty baby gate wedged in the doorway. Keep the dog on a leash and if the dog barks or tries to go after the cat, correct the dog by sternly saying "NO!" and then distracting it (a toy works well). Use the same method if the cat tries to go after the dog - a stern "NO!" and then a distraction. Do this for at least a week. The pet's reactions to each other should decrease over time. Then allow the cat out to be loose in the room while the dog is crated. Don't react if the dog barks and is excited when it sees the cat in closer proximity. Give the dog a distraction in its crate (like a Kong with peanut butter or a favorite toy). Do this step for several days, but only while you are home with the interaction supervised and the dog crated. When the pet's reactions have diminished to what you feel is a safe level of interest in each other, you can allow the dog and cat out together under your supervision.

Again, any threatening actions by the dog and/or cat should immediately result in a stern NO! to the offender(s) and then a distraction. Keep a leash on the dog so you can grab it if it seriously threatens the cat. Do this exercise for several days. There will probably be some skirmishes, you can never totally prevent them, but let the dog and cat know that you are in charge of the interaction and don't let it get out of hand. Always safely confine the cat in its room and/or place the dog in its crate away from the cat whenever you cannot supervise them. When you feel comfortable, you can remove the dog's leash when they interact.



Understand that while many dogs and cats safely live together, some may never be able to be left together unsupervised. To insure that neither gets hurt, trust your instincts, increase their interaction with each other gradually, and always err on the side of caution. REMEMBER:

Gradually introducing a new pet to existing pet(s) is the key.

Going too slowly is much better than proceeding too quickly (which could negatively impact your chances of success). Patience usually pays off!