



Introducing a New Dog to Your Cat

When introducing a new dog to resident cats, follow these phases and steps. All cats in the household should be included at the same time throughout the process. Take it slow and do not rush the process, it may take several **weeks to-months**. Once you complete a phase successfully, proceed to the next phase. Be patient. **If you don't see progress within a week or two, the services of a professional trainer may be in order.**

NEVER LEAVE YOUR DOG UNATTENDED WITH YOUR CAT(S) DURING THIS TRAINING PROCESS. YOUR DOG SHOULD BE CONTINUALLY SUPERVISED AT ALL TIMES WHEN CAT(S) ARE PRESENT. IF YOU CANNOT GIVE THE DOG AND CAT(S) YOUR FULL ATTENTION, IT IS SAFER TO SEPARATE THEM AND PROCEED WHEN YOU CAN GIVE THE SITUATION 100% OF YOUR FOCUS. THIS IS IMPERATIVE FOR THE SAFETY OF YOUR CAT(S).

BEFORE STARTING THIS PROCESS, the dog should understand a few basic obedience commands: SIT, PLACE, STAY and WATCH ME. These will be very useful when redirecting the dog's attention away from the cat. Do this training in an area with no distractions at first so nothing takes their attention away from the task (no cats or other dogs, indoors). Repeat these exercises no more than three times in each session and try to do at least three training sessions a day. (See [Basic Obedience Commands](#)).

Phase 1

- Set up a kennel in the main living area/common room where all the animals reside.
- Make sure the cats have a safe zone, like a bedroom the dog cannot go into.
- Have the dog on leash when outside of the kennel.
 - For the first week, it should be about setting boundaries for the dog (i.e., don't get in the cat's face). The dog should be 100% on leash around the cats at this point. If the dog tries to get too close or in the cat's face, step in front of the dog and ask for a SIT.
 - If the dog is too excited, remove them from the area for a few minutes and try again. This is where your PLACE command will be very helpful. If you can tell the dog PLACE and they retreat to the designated spot, it will reduce the tension and redirect the dog's focus. But remember – if the dog is too focused on the cat, it's best to put them in a kennel to calm down.

If your dog is still staring at the cat, lunging at the side of the kennel, or barking at the cat while kenneled, **do not proceed to Phase 2**. Contact TCDR for recommendations for a professional trainer to help you. Not every dog is capable of safe behavior around cats. Please do not take chances with your cat(s) well-being. If you have any doubt that your dog may not be ready to move forward, please reach out and do not continue with training.

Phase 2

- If the dog wants to sniff the cat, allow it, but hold onto the leash. If the cat is skittish and runs, do not let the dog chase the cat. Pull the dog back and walk in a circle three times. Put the dog in the kennel if too excited.
- Look for body language. If the dog is tense with tail straight out, or if eyes are constantly on the cat, remove the dog from the common room. This breed really likes being around their people, so they usually will start trying to please so that they can remain in the room with you. If you are consistent with your cues and remove the dog from the room immediately when they are too wound up, they will figure out that their behavior is what is causing the removal. But be sure to appropriately praise correct behavior as well: Yes—this is the behavior I want, not that behavior.

Phase 3

- After a week if the dog is behaving well around the cats, start giving the dog a looser leash. If the dog barks, whines, or wants to follow the cats closely, correct the dog by asking the dog to SIT or WATCH ME. If this doesn't redirect the dog's attention, gently tug on the leash, and ask again. If the dog continues with the pressure toward the cat (leaning on the leash, staring), move the dog away and do something else (work on SIT or WATCH ME) and then try again.
- Allow the cat to approach the dog. Do not force the cat to interact with the dog. Do NOT hold the cat while introducing. This is essentially holding a toy for the dog, which means they will see the cat as property.

Phase 4

- Start allowing the dog to walk around freely with cats but keep the leash on. Step on the leash if dog tries to chase cat or is generally too excited and go back and train Phase 3. Sometimes this only takes a little while, but with a dog that has high prey drive, this can take quite a bit of time. Some people spend three months just in Phases 2-3.

Phase 5

- If dog has not shown signs of aggression or prey drive, you can ease the dog off the leash slowly and watch closely while the dog interacts with the cats.

Additional tips:

- It's best practice to exercise or play with the dog before any interactions with the cat to reduce energy and levels of excitement.
- Reward dog behavior when good and respecting cat's boundaries and for positive interactions.
- Make sure to draw boundaries between the dog's belongings and the cat's belongings. For example, do not let the cats enter the dog's kennel or play with the dog's toys. Same goes for the dog—don't allow them to play with the cat's toys.
- Avoid shouting when you start introducing the dog to the cats.