

Dog & Cat Integration Tips

You have selected a dog that you feel has the potential to succeed at home with your cat(s). It is now up to you to take the time and follow the steps to integrate the two at home.

KEEP THE DOG AND CAT SEPARATE IN THE BEGINNING!

The first and most crucial step is to give your new dog the **time** to feel a little bit at home before meeting the cat. There is so much excitement when coming into a new home that the last thing you want to do is add a cat to the mix. An excited dog is less likely to focus calmly, so let your new dog get used to things first. That could be days, weeks, or more depending on the dog. **ABSOLUTE MINIMUM: 24-48 HOURS.**

Once your new dog is settled in, you can begin cat/dog integration training.

HIGH VALUE TREAT:

Find a treat your new dog cannot resist. This is short term, so chicken, steak, cheese, or whatever is most appealing can help you keep your dog's focus.

TIMING:

If you schedule your cat training session **before** your dog has their regular meal, they will be hungry. High-value treats plus hunger can provide a better incentive to follow instructions.

FIRST PHASE - VIEWING CAT IN ARMS:

With your high-value treat and a hungry dog on leash on one side of the room, give small bits of reward to get the dog's attention. Then have someone walk into the room holding the cat and stay a safe distance away.

Wait until your dog sees the cat and call their attention to you. When the dog looks away from the cat without a reaction, reward them. Repeat this cat-viewing/reward-for-non-reaction exercise many times. When comfortable, the person holding the cat can move closer. **NO CONTACT.** If the dog reacts at any time to the cat, end the session.

SECOND PHASE - VIEWING CAT ON THE GROUND:

When you have the cat-in-arms/reward routine down and feel comfortable moving on, the next step is similar to the first. From a safe distance, after getting the dog's attention with treats, have the person handling the cat place the cat on the ground. Reward and repeat as in the first phase.

LEASHED LEISURE TIME:

As the cat and dog become more familiar with each other through the reward-training phases, you can begin to solidify their tolerance of each other by having them both in the same room, secure and at a safe distance from each other, while you enjoy leisure time at home. For example, watch a movie with the cat in a lap and the dog on leash. Time spent coexisting under strict supervision helps them learn that they can calmly share the same home.

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CRATE TIME:

Using a crate for supervised time can be a helpful exercise. You can have the dog in a crate while the cat moves freely, or keep the cat safely contained while the dog remains on leash outside. Be sure to control the situation and always **reward wanted behavior**.

Using the steps above, while always supervising, rewarding, and taking your time, can help bring harmony between your new dog and your cat(s). Never rush the process or allow the new dog to chase the cat. Chasing can quickly become a repeated behavior that is difficult to undo. **Go slow.**

REMEMBER:

- Take your time. You cannot rush the process. It will take as long as it takes, and every animal is different.
- Let your new dog settle at home first before introducing the cat.
- Use a high-value reward to help redirect your dog's attention from the cat back to you.
- Never leave the cat and dog alone unsupervised.
- Be patient. Progress may take time.