

Dog and Cat Introductions

Dogs and cats can often live successfully together. If you are thinking of having a multi-species home, choose your companions thoughtfully and do introductions carefully, positively and **slowly**. Interspecies introductions can take a minimum of three weeks and up to a month or more depending on the individuals.

There are a few things you can do to ensure everyone's happiness:

CHOOSING YOUR NEW COMPANION: Choosing a dog or cat who has a history of a positive experience living with the other species can help the chances of your two new pets living together successfully, but does not guarantee it. Additionally, many dogs and cats can live happily together for the first time. The most important piece of the puzzle is that the introduction is done slowly and thoughtfully, taking into account the behavior and well-being of each animal along the way.

MANAGE FIRST: It is always a good idea to have a well thought out plan prior to bringing a new pet home. Avoid putting dogs and cats together in the first week with the hopes that they will “work things out”. When you cannot supervise your dog and cat together, use confinement of one of the pets in a room or crate. This may be something you do for the life of your cat and dog. Even the best dog and cat friends can get into scuffles. It is better to avoid this by confining one animal so they remain safe in your absence.

REWARD CALM BEHAVIOR: Try to have each introduction be a **positive** one. Use treats and/or petting for both pets. Carry treats with you or stash treats in small containers around in the different parts of your home where the animals cannot get to them. Ask relatives or friends to assist you as you may need two people to reward good behavior for both the dog and cat.

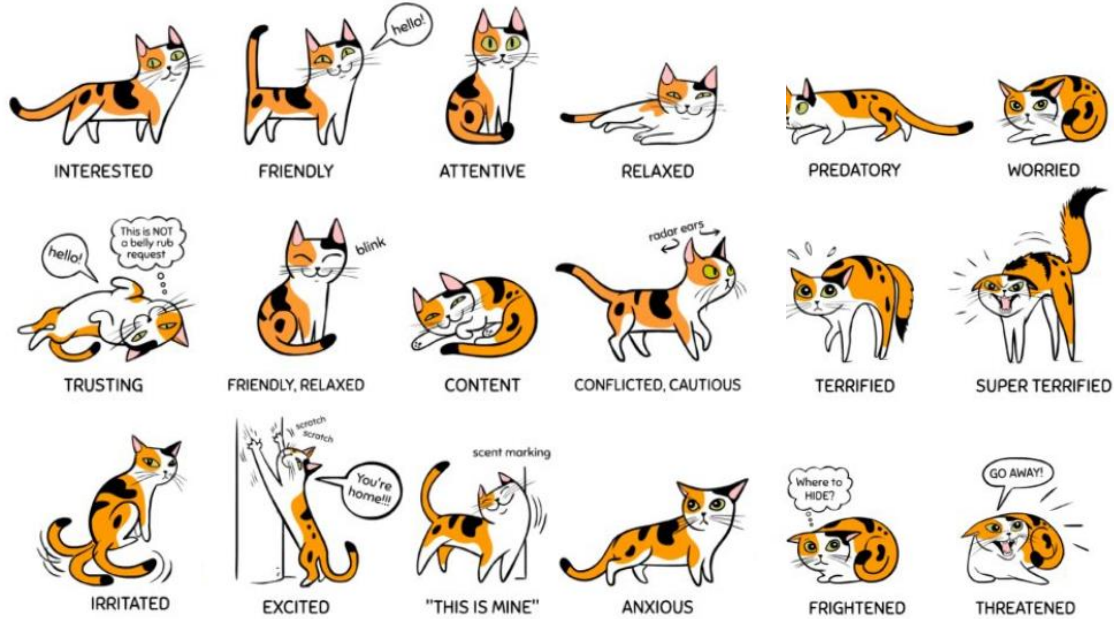
SAFETY ZONES: Ensure there are high places for the cat to escape out of the way of dog. The cat should also have a “**safety zone**” where litter boxes, food and water are kept, but the dog cannot gain access to them. Using a cat door installed in an interior door, a baby gate with a small hole cut into it or raised off the ground are great ways to allow cats to move away from dogs in a home when they want to do so. Use crates for dogs so they can eat or have a nap without pressure from an inquiring cat.

PATIENCE IS THE KEY TO SUCCESS: Recently adopted animals require a period of time to decompress as they transition into their new environment with their new family, regardless of whether or not their new family includes another animal. Likewise, having a new dog or cat in your home can be quite the adjustment for a resident dog or cat, even for animals who have successfully lived with another animal before. Being patient and progressing through your plan slowly is your **best** chance at creating lasting, positive relationships between your dog and cat.

Calm behavior in a **dog** would be a loosely moving body; gently, wagging tail and soft eye contact. Calm behavior in a **cat** would include any behavior where the cat looks generally relaxed. Their tail may be moving, but not in a fast or mechanical way. Ears would be up in a normal position. In both species, you would see no hair standing up on their back and no puffed tail. If either animal fixes their gaze on the other and will not break focus, barks, growls, hisses, becomes stiff or lunges, please call for assistance from a trainer.

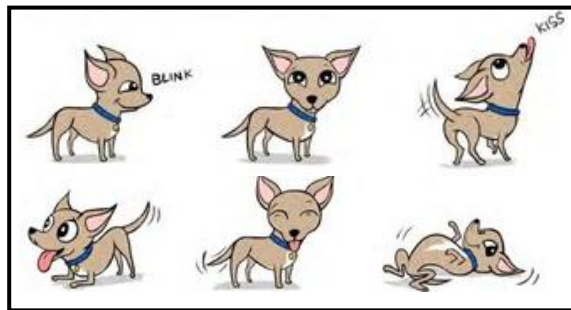
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CAT LANGUAGE



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Comfortable/Social/Playful:



Fearful/Nervous/Stressed:



Aroused/Confrontational:



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FOUR STEPS TO A SUCCESSFUL INTRODUCTION: *Note – only move from one step to the next when you are consistently observing calm, relaxed body language and behavior from both animals*

Step 1 - Set the cat up in a bedroom, bathroom or spare room. The cat may come out at times when the dog is out of the house. Allow for **independent** investigation of the other pet under the closed door. **Never force an animal to interact with another animal.** You can cover each pet's bedding with a towel and then swap the towels so each pet gets to smell the other with no direct interaction. Some hissing from cats is normal.

Step 2 – Next, you will add baby gates to the doorway separating the cat and dog. You may need two baby gates stacked in the doorway as cats will climb most gates. If you do not have access to baby gates, simply prop the door open a crack so both pets can see each other, but not interact directly. Allow the cat and dog to view each other through the barricade/baby gate. Feed both animals a treat or offer petting each time they are near the barricaded/baby gate with calm, relaxed behavior and body language. As soon as one pet moves away, stop feeding treats or petting. Do this until there is virtually no reaction from the cat toward the dog or vice versa. This step for may last at least a week, but could be longer depending on the individual animals.

Step 3 – With your dog on leash, allow the cat to come out of their room. Make sure that the cat can get back to their room should they choose to do so and keep the dog on a leash at all times. Arrange the environment in a way that encourages calm, relaxed behavior from your dog. Do this by practicing easy behaviors or tricks that are fun for your dog, allowing them to engage with a puzzle toy or lickimat, or other activities that will help them focus on something other than chasing your cat. Feed treats or offer petting to reinforce calm behavior to both pets when they see each other. After a minute or two, put the cat back in their room for a break. Repeat this process for as many days as you need, gradually increasing the time the cat spends out of their room. When you are not able to supervise their interactions, go back to the above set up with the dog crated or the cat in a separate room for safety. This part of the process should take at least a week and possibly longer. Do not rush this phase.

Step 4 - When both pets appear calm with each other for a full week, you can drop the dog's leash on the ground and let the two approach. Continue to have your dog on leash and dragging it in the house for at least another week in case you need to step in and re-direct them from each other.

Always confine at least one pet when you cannot be directly watching and supervising them.

This timeline is meant to be used as a guide and should be considered as the minimum amount of time on each step. Some animals may require longer. You should not progress to the next step until both animals are comfortable with the current step. If at any time you are uncomfortable with or unsure about your dog's or cat's behavior, please contact us for additional support.