

INTRODUCING YOUR NEW DOG TO YOUR CAT [or Vice Versa]

FULL DISCLOSURE: ultimately, there's no guarantee that your cat and your dog will ever become friends. Patience and management are the best tools until you have a feel for how things are going to go.

Start 'em young, if possible: Kittens and puppies usually adjust to other species more readily than adult cats and dogs. Animals socialized to other species when they are young are much more likely to be friendly to them as adults. Adult cats or dogs that grew up with the opposite species are likely to do well. Naturally, calm, socialized adults are easier to introduce than young, energetic adolescents.

PRE-FLIGHT CHECK

Set up a Safe Room: this will be a special "Fortress of Solitude" for your cat where the dog is never allowed to go. This could be a spare bedroom, utility room, a walk-in closet, etc. Even one-whole level of your house could be used this way. Use cat doors, gates, or doors wedged open with just enough space for the cat to go through but not the dog. Get your cat used to being in this space alone. Put your cat's food, water, bed and litter box in the Safe Room. Obviously, try to keep litter box away from other items.

Feline Bug Out Plans: have high places for your cat in other rooms. These are things that your cat can jump up on but the dog won't be able to: cat towers, high shelves with cat-friendly access, etc. Being high helps a cat feel safe and it keeps them out of reach of (most) dogs.

Have a Way to Contain Your Dog: you will need to make sure you've got a suitable crate, or a room with a door or gate. If your new dog is not crate trained or suffers from isolation distress/anxiety you're going to have a pretty tough time with this. Please consider all of the moving parts you'll have to manage. Do you have the time and resources to devote to this?

THINGS TO KNOW GOING IN

Your first concern should be your cat. Though they can defend themselves to some degree, cats are more vulnerable and the least social of the two. Cats can hurt dogs badly with their claws, but on the same token dogs are much stronger and can hurt or kill cats much easier.

Cats are often territorial and must be slowly introduced to "intruders." Cats also do not like their routines upset and may express their frustration by not using their litter box. It's not the end of the world if this happens and it can be remedied.

The quick movements of cats running and jumping often triggers prey drive in dogs. That said, most dogs can learn the difference between squirrels and cats (i.e. chase the squirrels, but not the cat).

Dogs can be quirky about it; they can be fine with a familiar cat and still attack a new cat. They can also be all right with a cat in the house and still attack the same cat outside.

A noisy, excited dog may just want to play, but may still accidentally hurt a cat.

Always avoid any form of punishment or correction for unwanted behavior. This can potentially make your pets associate unpleasant experiences with each other. This is called a "Superstitious Association" and it's very hard to undo.

OKAY, SO WHAT DO WE DO ABOUT IT?

Intensity Before Frequency: as with any behavior, in the correct progression you will see a reduction in intensity before you see a reduction in frequency. This is a training Master Key. Fixation on the cat will progressively get less intense and prolonged before the number of actual incidents diminishes.

Get Well Acquainted with both Cat and Dog Body Language: get a thorough understanding of the things your pets will do to communicate different states to other animals. Dog and cat body language is different. We recommend picking up a book, or at the very least looking at Lili Chin's infographics (<https://www.doggiedrawings.net/freeposters>)

In the meantime, some quick things to look for:

Cat signs of stress

- "Puffed up" body silhouette
- Arched back
- Ears pinned back
- Pupils dilated, hard stare
- Hissing or growling
- Twitchy tail

Dog signs of arousal and/or prey behavior

- Hard stare
- Still or stiff body posture
- Hackles up
- Crouching, slow steps
- "High and tight" tail wag, like it's waving a flag

Get Your Feedback Game Straightened Out: As we've said multiple times all over Simpawtico material, feedback is a key component to having a dog. More often than not, though, owners'

feedback is weak. Without going into a full lesson on feedback, markers, and all of that, some of the main ideas are:

- Don't take any good behavior for granted, especially something you got for free. Praise and reward all good behavior. Praise and reward engagement and focus.
- Mistakes are an opportunity to try again. If they were bad 3 seconds ago but are being good now, TELL THEM! Analog, representative feedback is critical.
- If you don't have a consistent communication system with your dog, get on it before you try to tackle any of this stuff. We use a marker system consisting of "Yes," "Good," and "Nope."

For more info, read our article on using feedback: <http://www.simpawtico-training.com/marker-training/>

Impulse Control: Any work you do with impulse control always translates to good character traits all around. It works kind of like a muscle, so it has to be trained, exercised, and kept toned. Usually the most effective ways to begin working on it is with:

- Waits and Stays at thresholds—build duration and ratchet up distractions
- Take It, Leave It—Take It and Leave It are easy to get good at quickly. We have a video on that: <https://youtu.be/grdlSRkbi1c>
- Drop It—taught with Tug, which is an instructive, multi-use activity all by itself.
- Good, polite leash walking—this is labor intensive but well worth the time spent on it.

Classical Conditioning: It is important to not simply address the things your dog or cat does; that's treating symptoms and not the cure. It's almost *more important* to address internal motivations, which is what's driving behavior in the first place.

We've written extensively about how to use Classical Conditioning so you can learn more. We have an article on our website:

<http://www.simpawtico-training.com/understanding-classical-conditioning/>

We also have a free, printable PDF on Classical Conditioning on the downloads page:

<http://www.simpawtico-training.com/learning/downloadables/>

PHEROMONES

New research done by the University of Lincoln in the UK suggests that pheromone products indeed have a beneficial effect on cat-dog interactions in the homes where tension may be present. The results show that the products used—Feliway Friends™, which emits pheromones that are calming for cats, and Adaptil™, which does the same for dogs—both had a positive impact on cat/dog interactions in the home.

The results also showed that Adaptil was more effective than the Feliway Friends. Despite the fact that the easement of the cat seems to have a stronger influence over the quality of the cat-dog relationship, it seems that releasing mainly dog pheromones was seen to increase “desirable interactions.”

Pheromones come in both diffuser and collar form.

BRINGING YOUR NEW DOG HOME (and making sure your cat doesn't riot)

PHASE ONE—ENVIRONMENTAL HABITUATION

- Have your cat in their Safe Room.
- Exercise your new dog outside, preferably in their new yard if there is a fenced space.
- Sniff-n-stroll to explore the boundaries of the yard on leash.
- Hand feed your dog some food.
- Bring your dog inside on leash and let them sniff the main living area; focus on where the cat has been.
- Make good observations of your dog's body language and reactions as they experience the cat's smell.
- Put the dog in their crate or room with a chew toy (providing they've been both crate trained and chew toy trained).
- Let your cat come out and smell the room that the dog has just been removed from.
- Make good observations of your cat's body language and reactions as they experience the dog's smell.
- Keep your cat and your dog in separate rooms for at least a week. When your dog is out, your cat is in the Safe Room. When your dog is crated or outside, your cat can be loose in house. Don't worry if it takes your cat some time to come out of their Safe Room; they'll do it when they're ready. Have some kind of cue that tells your cat it's safe to come out. A gate works very well for this. When the gate is down, for example, the coast is clear. **ONLY REMOVE IT WHEN THE DOG IS CONTAINED OR OUT OF THE HOUSE.** This cue has to be absolutely reliable for your cat, or they will never know when it's safe to come out.

PHASE TWO—PROTECTED SOCIALIZATION

- Let your dog and cat see each other with a barrier. Either have a gate up, or have your dog in their crate. Begin Classical Conditioning for both. Don't encourage interaction if they are not interested.
- Strive for at least two layers of protection: leash, barrier, or even a basket muzzle for the dog if necessary.
- Don't force interactions.

- *Don't put the cat in a crate* and let the dog explore around it. This can be extremely stressful for the cat because there's no escape route for them. Cats need to feel like they can get away.
- Monitor and adjust the work according to how they're doing.

PHASE THREE—DEEPER SOCIALIZATION

- Have your dog on a leash, and your cat loose in the room. Begin Classical Conditioning, emphasizing calm behavior.
- If either animal wants to retreat, make sure they can. Praise your dog for choosing to engage with you rather than your cat, or at least to otherwise not fixate on your cat.
- If one animal is friendly, but the other is not, do not allow them to interact. If your cat is friendly, but you are not sure about the dog, consider a muzzle for first interactions. This must be pre-trained before just slapping it on (consult a trainer for this).

PHASE FOUR (If your cat is allowed outside)

- Have your dog on a leash with your cat outside. Continue Classical Conditioning, emphasizing calm/friendly behavior.

PHASE FIVE—SHOWTIME!

- Test steps two and three without food.
- Allow both animals loose in the house together *with supervision*. Be ready to *calmly* intervene if necessary.

HOUSTON, WE HAVE A PROBLEM

If you find that you're struggling with the cat/dog peace negotiations in your house, then it's probably time to involve a professional to help you execute some of these plans. Find a trainer or (preferably) a behaviorist in your area to work more closely with you on this!