

Introducing Fluffy to Fido

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All these steps to introducing a cat to a dog are important and they need to be done in order. It's easier to introduce a dog to a cat who has never been threatened by a dog because the cat will interact with the dog more quickly, but this works for existing situations once the cat realizes it's safe. Some cats are easier to work with than others as well.

You do not want your dog to believe that you are possessing the cat- the dog must feel that he or she possesses the cat. Otherwise, the dog can see the cat as something to try to steal away from its owner, especially if there is any question of the owner being the pack "alpha".

During the learning process, the dog must never be allowed to chase the cat(s) or to play games that put it in prey drive while the cat is present. If this isn't done, the process will not work. Work with one dog at a time if possible.

- The owner of the dog must become the alpha dog in the household. The dog has to realize that it is not alpha and must take its cues from the human pack members as to who it accepts. The owner needs to have established a level of control without creating a robo-dog.
- When the dog is introduced to the household, the cats are shut away in another room. This is also true if you are introducing a cat into a household with dogs. There are no exceptions at all. Especially don't carry a cat in your arms if a dog is loose. This can be dangerous for cat, dog and human. A child should never ever carry a cat or small animal in its arms around a loose dog.
- When the cats are allowed out freely to roam without human supervision, the dog must be outside or where it cannot see the cat. It cannot be inside in a crate where it can see and/or bark or lunge at the cat without correction. This is vital and the entire process will not work if this isn't done properly.
- Shut the dog in its crate and allow the cat(s) out hopefully to walk past the dog crate. If the dog barks or lunges within the crate, the dog is verbally corrected. Make sure that the cats are in another room behind a closed door before letting the dog have its time out of the crate. I'm not talking about keeping the dog in the crate all the time, it's more keeping the cats in another room most of the time. The dog is crated while the cats are out, and then let out of the crate for most of the time. This may take several days or weeks to accomplish. It depends on how quickly the cat comes around to the dog's crate area (which should be with the family).
- Do not comfort, pet or fuss over the cats where the dog can see it from his crate. Especially don't do this after the dog has barked or lunged at the cat. Correct only the dog. This is because you do not want the dog to see the cat as your possession.
- Accustom the dog to a muzzle while it is hanging out in its crate. It will be muzzled when it goes to the vet or is groomed (even if we don't see it, it happens), so this way the dog is used to a muzzle. Leave it on for 10 - 15 minutes at a time if it isn't hot. If it's hot, the dog must not be muzzled because it can't pant. The muzzle is only a temporary tool. But the muzzle must be used for the cat's sake.
- After 10-14 days where the dog does not bark or lunge at the cat and the cat is comfortable walking around the crate, it's show time!
- Put a prong collar with a six foot leash on the dog. Don't forget to put the muzzle on the dog. I think a prong works better than a choke with less chance of injury to the dog in this situation. Have the dog in a sit-stay next to you with most of the slack out of the leash and let the cat walk through the room and up to the dog if it wishes (this is why you have the dog muzzled). If the dog makes an aggressive move towards the cat, it must be corrected strongly with both your voice and the collar. This is important - the correction must be physically very strong - not a nag. (PS: not many dogs need to be corrected at all).
- Do not correct the dog for sniffing at the cat. Sniffing is very good and is to be encouraged. Attention barking is also okay. The dog will feel any nervousness or tension of the owner via the leash and feed off of it, so it's important to be calm. That's also why the muzzle is on the dog - the owner knows the cat is safe no matter what. Do this for about 5-10 minutes at first, then put the dog or cat away. Try to be observant to end the session while both dog and cat are doing well. You can spin out the time until its an hour or so.
- Each time the dog first sees the cat, it gets a food treat. Cat = a cookie. If the dog is showing too much interest in the cat (like scenting for it), distract the dog by giving it something else to do, like a sit or heel with praise for doing what you've told it to do rather than automatically giving it a cookie. You can't reward the dog for not chasing the cat but you can reward it for doing something you've asked of it.
- There is no playing ball, running or chasing about the house, either by dogs, cats or humans while the dog and cat are out together. This is because care needs to be taken to see that the dog doesn't go into prey drive. This needs to continue throughout this entire process.
- Supervise the interaction and after 7-10 days where the dog has not had to be corrected, the prong and leash control can be eliminated. Even if you never had to correct the dog, it's important to wait 7-10 days. Leave on the muzzle. The dog and cat are not left unsupervised. If the dog chases the cat during this period, it's back to item #8.

After about four-six weeks where the owner has not observed any prey drive in the dog towards its cat, it is time to do without the muzzle. Interaction should still be supervised and the two animals never left alone unless there is a place for the cat to go to safety. If you've got a dog who is possessive about food, obviously you don't let the cat near when the dog is eating. Since cat food is very unhealthy for dogs, the cat's food should not be where the dog can reach it.

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