



Expanding your Pet Family

Many homes today include multiple animal companions. It is not unusual for a family of pets to include one or more dogs, a cat, bird, and the occasional gerbil and hamster! So, often times, in addition to meeting his new human family members, a new puppy or kitten must also be introduced to his new animal companions. Likewise, the resident pets must be safely introduced to the newcomer. Following a few easy guidelines can ensure peaceful and friendly introductions

INTRODUCTIONS WITH RESIDENT CATS

The best way to promote friendly relationships between cats and new pets is to introduce them gradually, always making sure that the resident cat feels comfortable as she slowly begins to accept the newcomer as part of the family. Here are some guidelines:

✓ *Resident adult's living area:*

When introducing a puppy or kitten to a resident indoor cat, the adult cat should be allowed access to as much of her normal home territory as possible, and must be provided with escape routes that allow her to avoid the puppy or new kitten if she so chooses.



✓ *Confine the newcomer:*

Initially confine your new kitten or puppy to a room that contains his food and water bowls (and a separate litter box for kittens), while allowing the resident cat to have as much of her usual living space in the house as possible. Your adult cat will be able to smell the new youngster, and keeping them separated will allow her to gradually adapt to the presence of a new animal.

✓ *Listen to the Adult:*

Use the adult cat's behavior as a guide to tell you when she is comfortable – purring, relaxed body postures, and curiosity about the new kitten or puppy are all signs of acceptance. Gradually increase the animals' exposure to each other by allowing short time periods of visual contact. It is a good idea to hold the puppy or kitten in your arms and allow the adult cat to make decisions regarding how close she is willing to approach during introductions.

✓ *Patience and supervision:*

For many cats, becoming comfortable with a new animal in the house can take many days or several weeks. In the meantime, give your resident cat plenty of attention and love and do not alter her daily routine. Supervise introductions closely. At first, allow the two individuals to have physical access to each other for only very short periods of time, always making sure that the adult cat has the option of going to another part of the house if she does not wish to interact. Do not allow a puppy or kitten to chase or harass the adult cat, even in play.



INTRODUCTIONS WITH RESIDENT DOGS

It may seem odd to many pet owners, but it is a fact that many adult dogs are not naturally tolerant of puppies. (Even more are not naturally friendly to cats, but most owners are aware of this). Just as with cats, the best way to promote friendly relationships between a resident dog and a new pet is through gradual and well managed introductions. Here are a few important rules to follow:

✓ **Pick up toys and food bowls:**

Before bringing the new puppy or kitten into the house, pick up your dog's toys and food bowl and secure these in an area that is not accessible to the newcomer. This will prevent any possession (resource guarding) problems. Do not allow a new pet to claim your adult dog's favorite resting place, toys, or eating space. Likewise, do not expect your adult dog to share his possessions with a new puppy or kitten.

✓ **Manage behavior:**

Your puppy or kitten should always be supervised when around your adult dog and should not be allowed to nip or harass the adult. The importance of gradual introductions and not allowing a young puppy or kitten to pester a resident adult dog is of utmost importance and cannot be overly emphasized.

✓ **Manage the environment:**

Baby gates are helpful aids for dividing space in your home. They can be used to keep the puppy/kitten and adult dogs physically separated while allowing gradual and well controlled introductions. Feed pets from their own bowls, separated by at least several feet of space. Do not allow one pet to steal from another's bowl; if necessary feed them in separate rooms.

✓ **Caution:**

When introducing a kitten to a dog, be especially alert for signs of overly intense or predatory play behavior in the dog (i.e. stalking, chasing, grabbing). These should be stopped immediately and should never be allowed. For dogs who insist on chasing cats, basic obedience training is often needed to keep cats safe. Providing "safe areas" for cats is also helpful in multiple pet homes (see Helpful Tips).

It may take months to even a year before your adult pet and the puppy or kitten become completely comfortable together. While some pets become great friends, others do not and simply learn to tolerate each other. Even if some remain standoffish, most pets appreciate the companionship of another animal in the house and attain a workable and safe relationship.

HELPFUL TIPS FOR KEEPING CATS SAFE FROM OTHER PETS

Providing "safe places" for cats is an important part of maintaining peace and keeping pets safe from harm in multiple-pet homes. This is especially important when cats are living with dogs. If your kitten learns that he can escape unwanted attention by moving to a designated resting area that is not accessible to the dog, this can keep him safe and will help him to feel secure in your home. Since cats enjoy resting and sometimes hiding in elevated places, a raised resting platform or climbing structure that has cubby holes is a great way to provide these places in multiple-pet homes. Cats learn that these areas are "off-limits" to the dog and are good places to get some quiet time when they need it.

Even in the most peaceful of homes, where dogs and cats get along fabulously, it is important to remember that most dogs are larger and stronger than cats and so can do great harm if they play too roughly or if predatory drive suddenly takes over from normal play behaviors. For this reason, owners should avoid leaving cats alone with dogs when they are away or when pets are not supervised.