

# Introducing Dogs to Cats

The best long term results for dog and cat introductions is to take your time and go through a step-by-step process of slowly acclimating the animals. The time frame listed below is just an estimation. You may be able to proceed through these steps faster or slower depending on your individual dog's behavior.

## **Week 1:**

Secure the cat in a separate room the dog cannot go into. Make sure the cats have everything they need because they will be there the entire first week. The dog and cat/s will not meet or see each other until the second week (or longer) so that the dog has time to get used to the new house first and also get used to the scent of the cat. To give your cats a break and for them to be able to smell the new dog, you can rotate "free" time in the house by kenneling or putting your dog in a secured closed off room and then allowing the cats loose in the house.

## **Week 2 and 3:**

Put the new dog on leash and bring the cat into the same room using a larger dog crate across the room. If you have any other dogs they should be out of the room. Reward your new dog for staying calm while the cat is across the room. Do not move the dog any closer yet. You want to be able to get your dog's attention in the presence of the cat so reward the dog anytime he looks away from the cat and especially if the dog looks at you! Constantly praise both animals if they are remaining clam. If the dog lunges or gets over excited, say "no" or "uh uh" and spray him with a water bottle 1-2 times to the face. Be sure to reward your dog if they choose a calmer behavior afterwards. Your dog is allowed to look at the cat, but should be heavily rewarded for choosing to look away from the cat! If your dog is showing appropriate/calm behaviors from across the room, begin to move closer and repeat the process. Only choose to move closer after your dog has successfully shown only positive behaviors at the previous distance 3 sessions in a row.

*\*\*\* If your dog is still showing too much interest or aggressive type behavior around the cat, you should consult with a professional to evaluate the situation \*\*\**

## **Week 4:**

Assuming your new dog is remaining clam around the cat and you have moved closer in proximity to the cat in the crate, you will start these exercises over again with the cat out of the crate. Start with your dog on leash across the room with the cat loose on the other side. You may need a friend to help hold or coral your cat to the stay in the general area. This will look different to your dog since the cat is outside of the crate and can move more freely and normally. A common trigger for dogs is when the cat runs across the room so be sure to heavily

reward your dog if the cat does move quickly or jumps up on something and your dog remains calm and quiet. Work up to a closer proximity to the cat, but not allowing the cat to approach the dog or for the dog to have access to the cat.

### **Week 5:**

If the dog is doing well on leash and is responsive to you around the cat you can try him loose with the cat. Keep a leash on your dog, but allow it to drag on the ground beside them like an extended handle that you can step on or quickly pick up if you need to interrupt or stop your dog. They are supervised the entire time and you are watching for any inappropriate behavior. Allow your cat to give appropriate warnings like hissing or swatting to indicate that he needs space. Your dog should respond to this by moving away, reward him when he does this. If your dog does not understand the cat's warning or thinks that it's play, help your dog by calling him away or guiding him away with the dragging leash. Continue to reward your dog for relaxed behavior and for anytime that your dog looks at the cat, but then chooses to look or move away.

### **Reminders:**

- Even dogs that respect cats indoors may chase or lunge towards cats outdoors so be very careful having your dog and cats in the backyard together.
- This is a general time frame and you may need to add more time to the process if you are having a hard time reading the new dog.
- New dogs and cats should not be left alone together for the first 6 months you have the dog. You are still getting to know your new dog and what he/she will do in every circumstance. Crating is ideal when you are not around.
  - The cat can become more accustomed to the dog while the dog is crated as well which will help in the long run.