**INTRODUCING YOUR NEW CAT OR KITTEN TO YOUR DOG**

Introducing your new cat to your dog may seem daunting but done thoughtfully and with patience, it can be achieved!

Cats are territorial and need to be introduced to other animals very slowly. They need time in order to get used to each other’s scent before a face-to-face meeting. Slow introductions also help prevent fear and aggression problems from developing.

Three key things to remember when introducing your new cat to your dog are:

**PATIENCE - POSITIVITY - PRAISE**

**Patience** - Allow your cat to become accustomed to their own **safe space** before introducing them to the rest of the house and any other animals. Put up a barrier that will keep the dog out and keep the cat in yet preferably one they can see each other through (e.g. modified baby gate or mesh barrier from hardware store) Get your dog to sit on the other side and praise and reward them for any calm and quiet behaviour. Allow them to sniff each other through the gate, and continue to praise and reward. Once your animals are comfortable with that bring out your cat and allow the dog to approach (on leash!) and sniff, rewarding them for any calm behaviour. Keep these meetings short but frequent, and with time (and patience!) you will be able to extend these meetings and have animals that have learnt to enjoy each other’s presence.

**Positivity** – Never allow your dog to be in a position of making a mistake; if they are meeting face to face your dog must be on a leash, if they are calm/quiet upon meeting reward them with a quick walk around the block - great to help them release all that excitable energy! You want your dog to think that all good things happen when the cat is around. If they stay on a sit outside the barrier, treat, praise and play with them. Whatever motivates your dog the most, reward them with that. If they are too excitable, just have them walk past the gate at first and build onto it.

**Praise** – It cannot be stressed enough, you want to build a positive relationship between your cat and your dog, which means your dog needs to think all good things happen when the cat is around! If they look at the new cat and don’t bark, reward; if they sit in front of the barrier quietly, reward; if they look at the cat then back at you, reward. If your dog barks, lunges, or is over excited, it is best to put them in time out for a minute rather than yell, smack or get frustrated. After taking them out of time out, put them on a sit in front of barrier again, praise, and reward. If they can’t do that then go back a step and walk them past the barrier while praising, and build onto it.

**Please be aware though we do have some experience introducing new cats and kittens to dogs, we are not trained behaviourists. If you are at all concerned please contact your local accredited positive trainer.**

9 Lives Orphanage

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**TIPS & TIDBITS**

* Your dog will need to be taught a reliable “leave it” cue. You can learn how to teach them here:

<https://positively.com/dog-behavior/basic-cues/leave-it/>

* **Catify** your home by creating high and covered (den) spaces for your cat to jump onto when feeling insecure. Think about the flow of your house; match up shelves - to bookcases - to a short leap to the coffee-table. By creating vertical spaces for your cat, you will make them feel much more secure and at peace.
* Think of your pets’ personalities and try to match them up. A playful dog should not be paired with an elderly or young cat; just as a dog with a tendency to chase should not be paired with a timid, run-and-hide scaredy cat.
* Brush your new cat and let your dog smell the brush and vice versa – a great way to introduce them to each other’s scent.
* Be sure to never leave your dog alone with your new cat.

**CONSULTING A DOG TRAINER**

If you have any problems or concerns with your dog’s behaviour towards your cat such as chasing, nipping, lunging or excessive barking, please get in touch with the 9 Lives Team, and your local force free dog trainer. Please do not use punitive home methods by using devices such as shock collars and anti-bark collars; they only create more behavioural issues as dogs think any shock around the cat, is because of the cat – thus making the issue worse. Through patience, and thoughtful preparation, dogs and cats can get along and (often, and do) become good friends.

**Sources and useful websites:**https://www.paws.org/library/cats/home-life/introducing-cat-to-dog/
<http://www.americanhumane.org/animals/adoption-pet-care/dog-behavior/introducing-dogs-to-cats.html>
http://www.adoptapet.com/blog/6-steps-to-introduce-a-new-cat-to-your-dog/
http://jacksongalaxy.com/2010/10/01/introducing-dogs-and-cats/