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DOG MEETS CAT

Good canine candidates for living with cats.

- Puppies or adult dogs that have successfully lived with a cat before.
- Laid-back, relaxed, friendly dogs.
- Dogs that are not very predatory (i.e. don't chase cats or squirrels when outdoors).

Good feline candidates for living with dogs.

- Relaxed, laid-back cats and kittens.
- Cats with dog experience.

Not-so-good feline candidates for living with dogs.

- Shy, skittish, and de-clawed cats. De-clawed cats are more vulnerable and are likely to behave aggressively when cornered.

Cats who haven't lived with dogs almost always behave defensively the first time they meet a new dog. If the dog doesn't come on too strong, and if the cat is given dog-free zones to retreat to, many cats will gradually get used to the dog and sometimes even become bonded. (But this can take weeks or months, so be patient.)

How to introduce the two.

Step 1. Keep the dog and cat apart for the first week before you try an introduction.

Step 2. Have the dog on leash to avoid stressing the cat and any flat-out chasing. Have the dog sit and take treats near the cat. Also treat the cat. If the dog can sit and take treats, allow him to meet the cat. Good signs are gentle investigation and wagging and respect for the cat's defensive signals. Bad signs are instant attempts to chase, straining at the leash, whining, and barking.

Repeat Step 2 several times before moving on.

Step 3. If the intros go well, drop the leash and supervise closely. If the dog is friendly or cautious with the cat, don't get involved in their interactions, except to praise and reward the dog for good manners. Interrupt chasing and give a time-out by removing the dog from the room. To make this easier, keep the dog on leash around the cat until you have worked out a routine.



DOG MEETS CAT (CONTINUED)

Step 4. Watch closely for the first few weeks. Are things getting better or worse? Supervise all interactions until you see a positive pattern in their relationship. If the dog is the newcomer, give plenty of extra attention to the cat so she doesn't associate the dog with reduced attention and affection. If the newcomer is the cat, make sure the dog associates the family addition with good things for him.

To be absolutely safe, separate your dog and your cat when you are not at home to supervise.

General advice for dog/cat households.

- Above all, be patient. The more gradual and gentle you make the process, the better your chance of success.
- Have a dog-free room (use baby-gates, cat doors) as well as high places the cat can access but the dog cannot. The cat needs places where she can regroup in peace and then venture forward into 'dog territory' at her own pace. Make sure food, water, and litter are accessible in this area.
- Never force the cat to be close to the dog by holding her, caging her, or otherwise restricting her. This is stressful and, aside from being inhumane, stress is a common reason for cats to break litter box training.
- Dogs should not have access to the cat litter box or feeding area—it is too stressful for the cat.
- A useful management exercise for cat-dog interactions is to practice sit-stays for treats with your dog when the cat is present.