



Fighting like Cats and Dogs? How to Introduce Cats and Dogs So They'll Get Along

Introducing cats and dogs is no easy job! If it's not done right, it can lead to lasting hostilities and a stressful household environment for your pets.

When introducing cats and dogs, you will want to go slow and make sure your cat feels as safe as possible while giving your dog time to become accustomed to the cat.

It is always much simpler to introduce a kitten to an adult dog than a puppy to an adult cat. Puppies and adult dogs often chase adult cats, and the cat feels tormented and victimized. This cannot be allowed to continue, as it creates a huge amount of stress and anxiety.

Step-by-Step Instructions: How to Introduce Dogs and Cats



1. Be Patient!

This can take anywhere from weeks to months. Move slowly, keep your pets relaxed, and only move onto the next step once you and your pets are comfortable with the previous one.



2. Use Anti-Anxiety Nutritional Supplements to Help Calm Both Cat and Dog

Ask your vet about anti-anxiety nutritional or pheromone products to help soothe both cats and dogs. They should be able to recommend the right products for your pets.

Contact Information



Step-by-Step Instructions: How to Introduce Dogs and Cats (cont'd)



3. Create a Safe Space for Your Cat

This room must be off-limits to the dog, have everything your cat needs (food, water, clean litter), and be completely secure (the door should close tightly with no chance of unanticipated dogs bursting through). Your bedroom is ideal, if your cat is a quiet sleeper.

You can then feed your dog and cat on opposite sides of the door, to start to create a positive association. They will be able to smell each other through the door.



4. Do a Scent Exchange

Rub one towel or cloth on your dog and another towel or cloth on your cat. Give them the opposite towels to smell while still in their separate spaces.

Leave the towel or cloth under each pet's food dish to further promote the positive association.



5. Train Your Dog

Train your dog to sit still and look at you. Practice repeatedly, including on walks and in your yard until your dog becomes good at it. Make a special effort to practice (and offer treats for success) in the presence of distractions.



6. Have Your Dog Sit and Focus – Introduce the Cat in a Carrier

Important for this step:

- Keep your dog on a leash so even if it doesn't go well, your cat will be (and feel) safe.
- Keep your cat in a carrier.

Get your dog to sit and look at you inside your house with the cat somewhere far away. Feed both pets treats and slowly move them closer together. Make sure your dog stays calm throughout this process. Provide rewards when your dog sits and focuses on you while the cat is within view.

Slowly progress to having both pets in the same room (alternate: dog on leash and cat in carrier, then dog in carrier and cat walks freely). Keep feeding both of them high quality treats and practicing sitting and focusing with your dog.

If either pet becomes anxious or stressed during this phase or will not eat their treats, slow it down even more and move them further apart.

You can then feed your dog and cat on opposite sides of the door, to start to create a positive association. They will be able to smell each other through the door.

Step-by-Step Instructions: How to Introduce Dogs and Cats (cont'd)



7. Free the Cat

Once your pets have mastered the above step and are comfortable, let your cat out of the carrier. Keep your dog on a short leash, after an exhausting round of outdoor activity.

Continue the sit-and-focus routine with your dog, giving it treats as your cat explores.

Make sure your cat's nails are trimmed. Cats can swat at dogs the first time they meet, and you don't want your dog to be injured. If your cat does swat the dog's face, just watch and wait. Dogs often learn quickly to back off and respect the cat.

If your dog is too distracted by the cat, move them further away until and continue the training exercise.



8. Repeat

Repeat the above step with your cat out of the carrier and exploring the room until your dog is routinely ignoring the cat.

Remember, a cat moving around the room is more interesting to your dog than a cat who is not moving or who is in a carrier. This step may take time, and it is critical to get right.



9. Take Your Dog Off the Leash

Only after your dog is consistently behaving and ignoring your cat while it is moving around the room, remove the leash from your dog. Have both pets in the same room – leash and carrier free.

Put up a baby gate to make sure your cat can get away if it needs to.

The first time you do this, only keep your pets together in the room for a short period of time.



10. Gradually Increase Time Together

Keep bringing your dog and cat together in the room off leash and out of the crate. Always supervise their interactions, and little by little increase how long they spend together.

By the end, you should reach a peaceful coexistence – or maybe even a friendship!

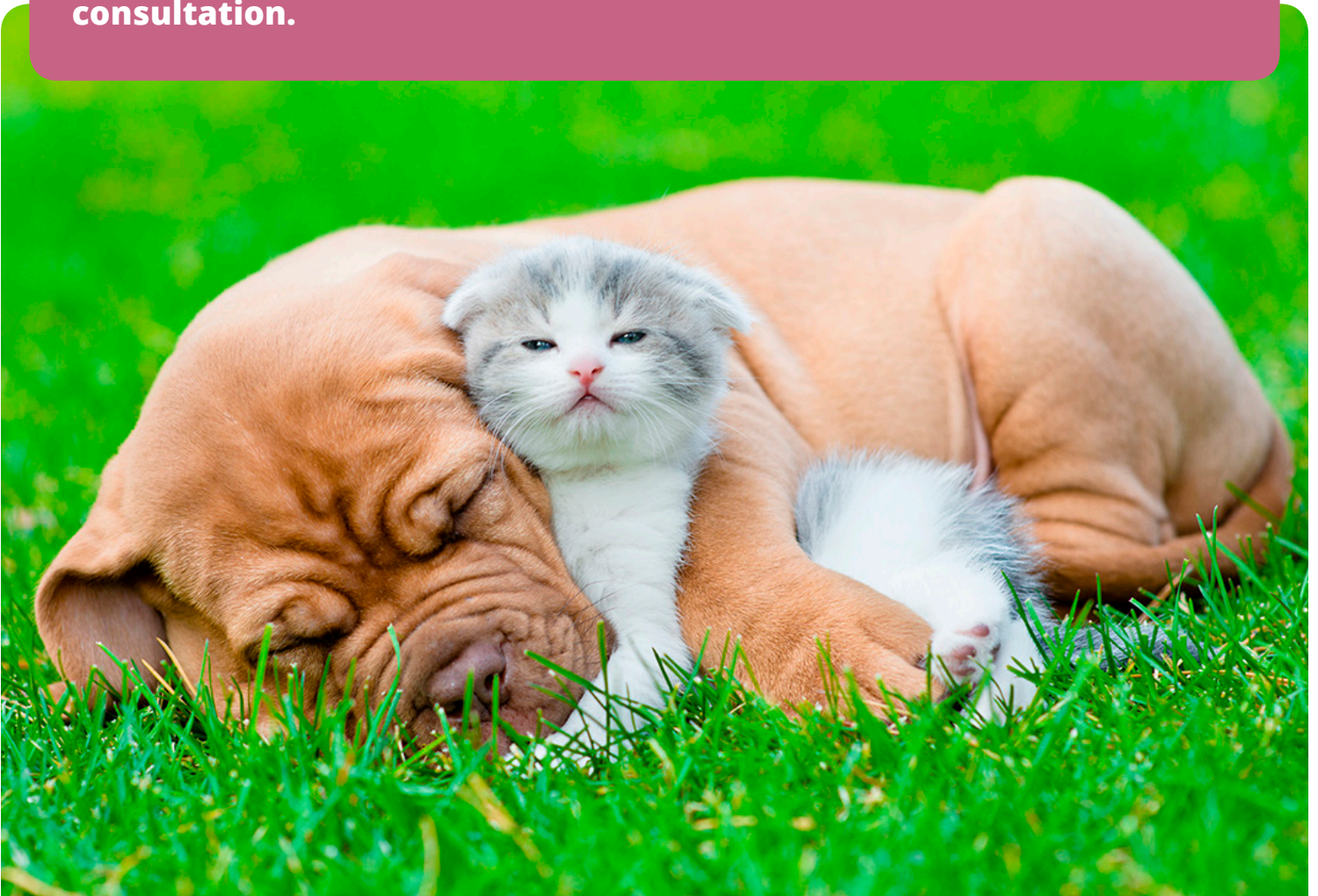


11. If These Steps Don't Work?

If this process, over the course of several weeks, is not successful in getting your dog and cat to peacefully cohabit – especially if your dog is obsessively pursuing your cat – you should call the veterinarian for help.

Dr. Mudrick is trained to provide pet behavioural counseling and behavioural treatment plans.

If you are concerned about any aspect of your pet's behaviour, please contact us and request an appointment for a behavioural consultation.



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