



# **TRAINING RESOURCES**



## HOW TO INTRODUCE A NEW DOG TO YOUR RESIDENT CAT

Before you introduce your foster dog to your cat, you should wait a few days until you have confirmed or instilled basic obedience in your foster dog. You will need to have your foster dog under control and know which behaviors are appropriate when interacting with a cat.

All dogs are driven to chase things; some may have a stronger drive than others. In a dog's eyes cats are wonderful to chase. They are small, furry, and have those wonderful long tails. Cats are also usually pretty fast and can lead a dog on a merry chase, which only makes the dog want to do it again and again. If we could only teach those cats not to run away! That is beyond my expertise, so the focus of this article is what we can do to help the dog stop chasing the cat.

Properly introducing the dog and cat can help things go harmoniously from the start. Never force the cat to meet the dog. Cats are cautious by nature and will approach when they feel safe. Crating or tethering the dog so the cat can get close without having to worry about running can go a long way toward making the cat feel better. Making sure that the dog is in the presence of things the cat loves, such as her favorite toy or cat nip, can also help things along. However, there are times when even the most careful introductions won't make Kitty and Fido best friends. That's where the rest of this section comes in.

First of all, make sure that you have a safe place for the cat to go. You can use a baby gate, jerry-rig a door to open only wide enough for the cat to slip in, or actually install a cat door in the interior door. (If your dog has full run of the house, you may need to make a safe place for your cat on all levels of your home.) In the cat's sanctuary, have at least her litter box and water. Make sure the sanctuary is a place the cat likes to go.

The next thing you should do is work on basic obedience commands with your dog in a distraction-free environment. "sit", "stay", and "come" are a minimum and they should be very reliable off leash and out of your arm's reach. As the dog gets good at these with minimum distractions, gradually add distractions. Keep in mind that the cat may be the highest level distraction, so it could be awhile before you are ready to introduce her to your training sessions.

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CAT SO YOU ARE PREPARED.**

If all is reasonably calm so far, walk the dog around the room on leash, but don't let go of the leash in case the dog decides to chase the cat. On leash interactions give the cat the opportunity to approach the dog if they choose, or to find a route of escape. During the first few meetings, the cat and dog will probably not interact face-to-face. A dog is a predatory animal. It's a natural instinct for a dog to want to chase a cat. Assume the dog will chase the cat so you are prepared. Never allow the dog to intimidate the cat by barking or chasing. Each time the dog acts inappropriately (barking), let him know these behaviors are unacceptable; try using a verbal interrupter like "Oops" to get their attention and redirect their energy. On the other hand, if the cat bops the dog on the nose as a warning, that's a good sign and should not be discouraged. When they set up boundaries between themselves, they are beginning to establish a working relationship.

Let them interact with the dog on leash for about 30 minutes, then return the cat back to its safe haven and bring the dog to its crate or bed. Give the dog a treat and lots of praise. Increase the amount of time they are together a little each visit. It is important to be patient and encouraging in their interactions. If you're relaxed, they will be more at ease. Always praise friendly behavior.

Don't rush the introduction or force them to interact more than either is willing. Pressing them to accept each other will only slow down the adjustment process. When the cat and dog seem to be getting used to each other, let the dog go, but keep his leash attached to his collar. Let him drag it around the house as he wanders, that way you can control him at any time. The cat will probably hide first. You should use your best judgment as to when they can begin supervised sessions with the dog off-leash.

Remember that this will take some time. Keep in mind that the dog is not only getting used to the idea of a cat in his house, but also his new people, routine, and what these people expect of him. It may take a month or more for things to settle into a somewhat normal existence. Also remember not to tempt fate by allowing the cat and dog to be together if you are not around to supervise. Sometimes the best-behaved dogs can get too rough in play, which can result in injury or worse. Crating the dog, or closing him in one area while the cat is in another area is a wise safety precaution, even if you don't feel it is necessary.