

Introducing a New Cat to a Resident Dog

Dogs and cats who have not experienced each other will require some extra time to become accustomed to each other. Dogs usually want to chase and play with cats, and cats are usually afraid and defensive. You can use any of the techniques described in "Introducing a new cat to other cats." If your dog does not already know the commands "sit," "down," "come," and "stay," you should begin working on them. Little tidbits of food increase your dog's motivation to perform, which will be necessary in the presence of such a strong distraction as a new cat.

Begin as described in Introducing a New Cat to a Resident Cat article. Take the time to go through the steps.

1. Once the cat is comfortable in the house and has been introduced to the smells of the dog, you can attempt a face to face introduction in a controlled manner. Put your dog's leash on, and command him to either "sit" or "down" and "stay,". Have another family member enter the room and quietly sit down with the cat on his or her lap. At first, the cat and dog should be on opposite sides of the room. Praise both and give treats. Repeat this step several times until both the cat and dog are tolerating each other without fear, aggression, or other uncontrollable behavior.

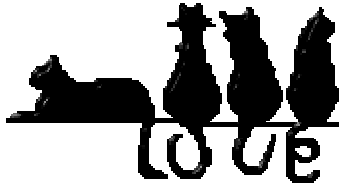
2. Next, move the animals a little closer together, with the dog still on a leash and the cat gently held in a lap. If the cat does not like to be held, you can use a wire crate or carrier instead. If the dog gets up from its "stay" position, it should be firmly repositioned, and praised and rewarded for obeying the "stay" command. If the cat becomes frightened, increase the distance between the animals and progress more slowly. Providing the cat with a cat tree or high place to be above the dog will help her feel more confident.

3. Try to direct each session so the dog is likely to do the right thing and get praise. Although your dog must be taught that chasing or being rough with the cat is unacceptable behavior, if your dog is always punished whenever the cat is around, and never has "good things" happen in the cat's presence, your dog may associate the cat with unpleasant reprimands.

4. You may want to keep your dog on a leash and with you when the cat is free in the house during the introduction process. Be sure that your cat has an escape route, and a place to hide. Keep the dog and cat separated when you aren't home until you are certain they will both be safe.

Precautions: Dogs like to eat cat food because it is very high in protein, and therefore very tasty, but it's not good for them. Keep cat food out of the dog's reach (in a closet, on a high shelf, etc.). Likewise, cats should not eat dog food exclusively as it may cause dietary deficiencies.

Dogs like to eat cat feces, and although there are no real health hazards to the dog from this habit except possibly increased vomiting, it is usually distasteful to the owners and disruptive to the cat's use of the box. The best solution is to place the litter box where the dog cannot access it such as behind a baby gate, install an interior cat door to a laundry room, or build/purchase a litterbox bench (like a toybox with cat-sized hole) to contain the litterbox.



FIV Positive Cats

FIV positive cats can have a difficult time finding homes, even though in all respects they are normal, loving cats. Please don't allow the FIV stigma to prevent you from opening your heart and home to a wonderful kitty companion.

FIV stands for Feline Immunodeficiency Virus. It's a lentivirus, meaning that it progresses very slowly, gradually affecting a cat's immune system. The virus weakens the cat's defense against disease but does not eliminate it altogether. Cats that test positive for Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV) can live long and healthy lives, sometimes with no symptoms at all.

Here are some facts about FIV:

1. The Feline Immuno-deficiency Virus is a slow virus that affects a cat's immune system over a period of years.
2. The virus can be spread through blood transfusions, badly infected gums, or serious, penetrating bite wounds.
3. FIV is a cat-only disease and cannot be spread to humans or other non-felines.
4. FIV is cannot be spread casually - like in litter boxes, water and food bowls, or when snuggling and playing.
5. FIV cats most often live long, healthy, and relatively normal lives with no symptoms at all.

In order for a FIV cat to live a long and healthy life, it is important to keep the cat's immune system strong. Here are some general rules for protecting FIV positive cats from disease.

1. They need to live in a household as the only cat, or with other FIV positive cats.
2. They need to be kept indoors to avoid non-FIV, healthy cats that are often carriers of disease germs that their immune system prevents from turning into a full-blown infection. The FIV positive may get infected and become ill.
3. They must be free of external and internal parasites as they weaken the body by taking away vital nutrients and may also harbor disease.
4. They are not to eat uncooked meat or fish. Raw meat may contain parasites and potentially harmful germs.
5. They must be fed a high-quality healthy diet to assist the cat's immune system to function better.
6. Treat any secondary problems as soon as they arise. Regular vet checkups are recommended.
7. Give him or her plenty of love and attention.

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Cat-Proofing Your Home

Cats are curious by nature, and they love to climb and jump on top of high places. When your cat is getting used to her new surroundings, she will be doing a lot of investigating and exploring. You need to make sure your home is safe and secure - follow these guidelines and check off items as you proceed through your home;

1. Check all windows and screens to make sure they are very strong. Cats can push weak or torn screens out from the frame or tear them. Cats can escape even from second or third story (or higher!) windows and may injure themselves in the process. It is best to install new steel screens, or place metal grilles such as the ones available for screen doors over windows you wish to keep open. If in doubt, keep the window closed at night and while you are away.

2. If you have a balcony, don't let the cat out there. Cats often try to leap onto railings or after birds and may fall. Balconies are not safe places for cats.

3. Remove plants that may be poisonous. Cats love to chew plants, and some cats may use potted plants as a litter box, so try to hang all plants out of reach or move them outside. If you are not sure if your plants are poisonous to cats, ask your vet. Common plants that are poisonous include; philodendrons, ferns, all lilies, and poinsettias. One taste of a lily can kill a cat.

4. Lock up all cleaning supplies, drain openers, medications, and other poisonous substances. Place them in a sealable plastic container with a latched lid. Make sure antifreeze is not accessible and do not allow your cat in your garage where leaked fluids can poison her. Animals are attracted to the sweet taste of antifreeze and other toxic substances.

5. Check for pest poisons and remove them. Rat poison, ant and roach poison and rodent traps are all dangerous to cats. If you rent your home or recently moved in, do a thorough check for existing poisons, sometimes they are left behind by previous tenants. Check the back of all cupboards, drawers, closets, etc. Cats can become sick or die from eating the poison or from rats or insects that have ingested the poison.

6. Remove dangling cords such as the strings from blinds and phone cords. Cats can't resist playing with these items and can become entangled and hang or choke. Tie up cords from blinds near the top of the window, and secure loose power cords and cables with ties out of reach or behind furniture. Some cats may also chew electrical cords and could be electrocuted – make sure your cords are tucked away.

7. **Put away breakable items**, especially on bookshelves and countertops where cats may investigate. Make sure shelves and furniture are stable and won't tip over.

8. **Pick up any small, swallowable items and strings.** Rubber bands, paper clips, string, thumb tacks, broken balloons, tree tinsel and other small articles are tempting play objects for cats, but pose a choking hazard. String can cut the intestines if swallowed. *Important:* if your cat ever swallows string, NEVER pull the string out from either end – you can cause internal damage. Call your vet immediately.

9. **Set aside a "safe room" for your new arrival.** Put her food dish, water, litter box, toys, scratching post and bed in it. Give this room a thorough going over. Once kitty is comfortable in her new surroundings, it will be time to let her explore the rest of your happily cat-proofed home.

10. **EXTRA CAUTION WITH KITTENS.** Kittens will get into very small places, always be sure to check on them before starting appliances, moving anything or sitting in a chair. Kittens have been injured or killed in clothes driers, reclining chairs, dresser drawers, and many other places you'd never imagine. So be safe – always know where your kitten is!