

How to help cats and dogs get along



Article by Dr Alice Marshall, Registered Veterinarian (NSW VSB)

Dogs and cats can happily live side by side. Slow introductions, patience, and safe places to retreat are essential for your animals and household peace.

Be in it for the long term.

Be prepared to manage and supervise any interaction for weeks, if not months. The safety and comfort of your animals are essential, and they will look to you for calm behavioural cues. A cat may have lived happily with some dogs but react poorly to others. So, even if your cat has lived with dogs before, use caution and proceed slowly.

First smells.

If you are bringing a new animal home for the first time, keep your animals separate for a few days. Your pets will be able to smell each other, which can

help ease them into the headspace of having a new companion. If your new pet is a dog, reinforce basic obedience commands so they can help control and focus your dog when your animals meet.

First introductions.

Next, let your pets see each other through a barrier like a baby gate or screen door. Having your dog on a lead can help add some extra control to the situation if needed. Start with short sessions and allow both animals to get used to each other at their own pace.

Repeat.

When they appear ready, allow your animals loose in the same room together. Keep your dog on a long leash so you can intervene if needed.

Repeat face-to-face sessions daily. Save your pets' favourite treats for when they are together. Let your cat leave the room if they choose to.

Be attentive and end sessions before any aggression occurs.

Separate spaces.

Make sure your cat has access to dog-free areas at all times. In combined living spaces, ensure different heights where cats can climb to escape dogs and manage anxiety or aggression. This applies to toilet areas too. Keep your cat's litter box in a quiet, preferably cat only area of your house, where they won't be disturbed.

Continue supervised sessions.

And separate pets when you are not there to supervise them.

Continued over page...

When to seek professional assistance.

Sometimes our pets' personalities do not mesh. If you aren't sure if the animals in your home can live together safely, the best advice is to consult your local vet. They will be able to give advice, or the name of a recommended, certified animal behaviour consultant.

This article is for general information only. We recommend that you speak to your veterinarian regarding specific advice and help for your pet.



1800 999 738
vetschoice.net.au

