

# Introducing Your New Dog to Your Cat

## *Cats Rule*

A simple rule to keep in mind about cats is that they need to feel that they are in control. They don't like to be cornered and need to know that they have an escape route or can jump to a high inaccessible spot to be safe.

## *Cats Hate Change*

Even though your cat might enjoy a new box to explore or love it when the furniture gets rearranged, cats hate change.

If the initial introduction goes poorly, Kitty may take forever to forgive and make friends with your new dog. So make the extra effort in the first week or two. How long this gradual introduction takes depends on the individual animals and very much on you.

Your cat may have lived happily with a dog in the past but that does not mean that she will automatically accept the new dog the instant he walks in the door. After all, just because you like one person, does not mean that you will like everyone, right?

Likewise, the new dog may be known to be fine with cats but that does not guarantee that he will do well with your cats. Some dogs are perfectly fine with "their" cat but will chase other cats. He will need time to bond with his new cat.

## *Set Them Up for Success*

Your new dog will most likely arrive at his new home in a state of excitement and confusion and will need time to settle in and calm down before he should be expected to behave with any dignity around a cat. Plan to put kitty and all her things including food and litter box in a comfy "safe" room and keep the door closed.

If you have never had a dog before and these arrangements will be a change for Kitty, gradually make the changes to her areas BEFORE the dog arrives. That way she won't be overwhelmed.

The bedroom of her favorite person would be a good choice for a "safe room", not the dungeon basement. She will be able to hear the commotion but will feel safe and protected. Don't forget to spend some time with her, too.

Your dog will know Kitty lives there by her scent throughout the house. Allow him to sniff around the door of her "safe room". She will be doing the same thing on the other side.

### **Redirect Rude Behavior**

If the dog barks or paws at the door to her room, a simple "No" will do. Call him away to another area or go outside. No need to yell or punish just give him something better to do. If your dog will not leave the door, then put a leash on him, lead him away and reward him.

Do not be overly anxious about normal curiosity. After all, there is another animal on the other side of the door! Watch for pawing, scratching and whining. That behavior should be redirected.

### **Praise the Absence of Rude Behavior**

Praise him when he sniffs her door and just walks away. Praise when he ignores the door. If he hears her meowing and sniffs or does nothing, praise. If he leaves the door and comes to you, praise.

### **Signs of Stress**

Dogs deal with stress in different ways. Stay calm and watch for signs of stress that may include excessive drinking, pacing, over active "out of control" behavior, attaching to one member of the family, trying to escape, hiding.

Take extra precautions especially in the first few days. Keep his identification tags on him and be careful to keep him secure in the yard or house until he understands that this is "home".

### Letting Kitty Out

When you think Kitty is ready to explore, take the dog out for a walk or play in the yard and let the cat out to explore the house. Allow plenty of time. Let her see the dog in the yard. Give her some special treats. Dog = treats. Put her back in the "safe room". Take a bed or blanket that she has been using and put it out for the dog to check out. Allow the dog back in. He will be getting to know her through her scent.

You may also take a blanket from the dog and put it in Kitty's room.

### Peek-a-boo

If you have a baby gate, put it in the doorway to Kitty's room and slightly open the door. Now they can see each other. Have the dog on a leash. Most Springers can easily jump over a gate if motivated, so consider stacking a second one on top of the first. Slowly walk him past the room showing him that this is no big deal. Praise for good behavior. Do not encourage the dog to stand at the door and stare for more than a minute. Call him away from the door and praise him for leaving the cat alone. Kitty may hide at first. Let her come to the door when she feels it is safe.

Watch your dog's body language. If he is interested but relaxed or calm, this is better than staring at door with stiff and tense posture. Pay attention to his body language and behavior every step of the way.

If the dog is not overly interested, or is calmly curious in Kitty then take him off the leash.

Allow him to see inside the room. If he is calm and willingly walks away from the room, praise.

Rude behavior like pawing at the gate or barking at Kitty should be corrected with an immediate "No!" and time out. The time out should consist

of no attention from you and removal from the room. Put him in a crate or other room for about 3 or 4 minutes. Your point has been made.

Bring him back out without any comment and try again.

### **Zone Defense**

Once Kitty no longer needs her "safe room" put the litter box and cat food in a dog free zone. Some dogs will eat cat feces and almost all dogs will eat cat food. Solving this can be as simple as getting a covered litter box or installing a cat door to the room with the litter box. There are also products on the market to hide the litter box.

Raising her food dish to a counter top will deter some dogs, however we must caution you that some Springers are notorious for counter surfing. If the cat's dish is suddenly licked very clean all the time and Kitty is always hungry, the dog is probably the culprit!

It is also a good idea to leave the baby gate up at the "safe room" for a while. Raise it up just enough so that she can scoot under it or jump over it if she feels threatened, giving her an escape route.

If you have never had a dog before and these arrangements will be a change for Kitty, gradually make the changes.

### **New Best Friend**

Cats and dogs can live in peaceful co-existence when introduced properly and even be great company and comfort to each other. Relationships take time to grow and under your guidance your cat and dog can become friends.

This article is an outline only. We realize that each animal is different and may react differently under similar circumstances. Pay attention, watch your dogs' behavior and respond accordingly. Your cat is at a disadvantage and needs your assistance. Always, always err on the side of caution.

**Enjoy!**

Some of the funniest pet stories come from interactions between cats and dogs.

If you have any questions, please email MAESSR at [springerrescue@yahoo.com](mailto:springerrescue@yahoo.com).