



THE
LOST DOGS
HOME

What You Need to Know: Introducing Your Adopted Cat & Resident Dog

A slow and gradual introduction will ensure the safety of both your pets and is more likely to result in an amicable relationship. Keep in mind, this process may take several weeks or months.

01 Prior to Adoption

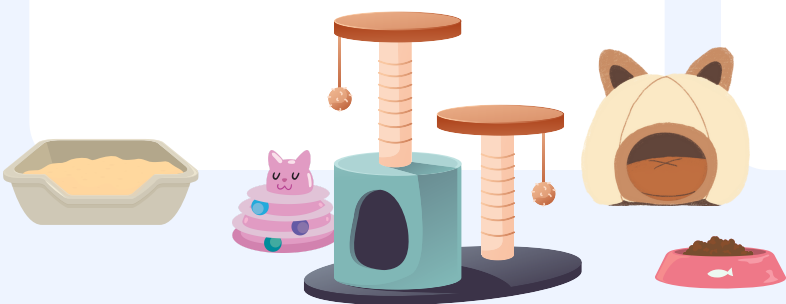
Things to Consider:

Age & Temperament: Select a companion that will be compatible with your dog's personality and energy levels.
Space: Is there enough space in your home for each animal to exist independently of each other if they choose not to interact?

Preparing For a New Cat:

- Create a private and comfortable space for your new cat to settle. A bedroom or office with a door that closes is ideal.
- Set up all the amenities your new cat will need to feel safe and secure: food, water, bedding, large litter tray, a scratching surface, toys, vertical spaces to perch, and multiple accessible hiding places.
- Ensure that your resident dog does not have access to your new cat's safe space.

Tip: Aim to maintain your resident dog's routine as much as possible. Provide them with plenty of enrichment and exercise.



02 Bringing Your Cat Home

First impressions matter!

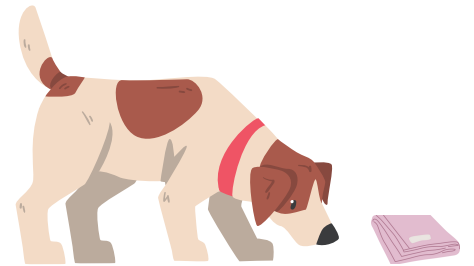
Rushed introductions are likely to result in fearful behaviours. Resist the urge to let your animals see or smell each other when you bring your new cat home.

- Cover your newly adopted cat's carrier with a blanket or towel while traveling, this will help them stay calm.
- Keep the carrier covered when you enter your home and **take your new cat straight to their private space.**
- Open the carrier and let your cat choose whether they wish to exit – avoid forcing or luring your cat out of hiding at this stage.
- Give your cat plenty of time to get acquainted with their new space. It may take several days or weeks for your cat to feel comfortable in their new home.

Tip: If your new cat is choosing to hide, try not to take it personally. Avoid forcing physical contact or moving them from their hiding spot. **Build positive experiences** by offering high value treats and providing a predictable routine.

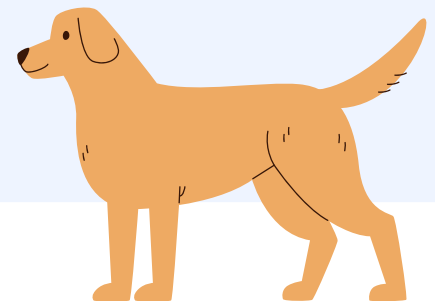


03 Scent Swapping



Once both pets are comfortable in their own environments, you can start swapping scents to build familiarity.

- Collect your pet's scent by placing a washcloth or other soft item in their preferred resting area for 2-3 days.
- Place this item in the other pet's space – avoid placing the new scent too close to your pet, instead allow them to approach when they are ready.
- Monitor your pet's response; ideally, they are curious to explore the item, but not fixated on it. Loose body language is a sign that your pet is likely feeling comfortable.
- If either animal shows signs of fear or stress remove the item and try again a few days later.



04

Time Sharing

Allow your pets to explore each other's space without meeting. Take your dog out for a walk while the cat explores their space. Use toys or food to lure your cat into another room then let the dog investigate their space.

Important: Only move to the next step in the introduction process when both animals are calm and showing relaxed body language.

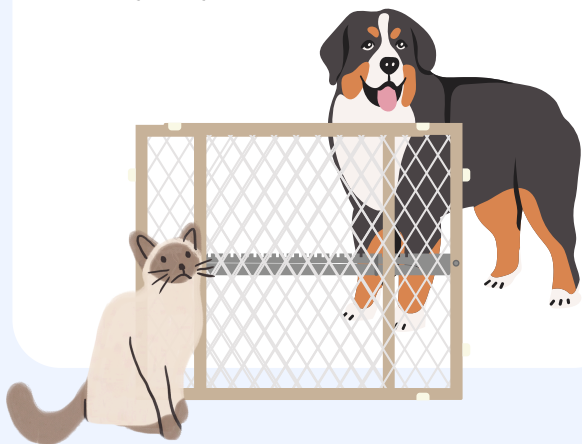


05

Visual Introductions

Use a baby gate or similar barrier to let your pets visualise each other from a distance.

- Ideally there is one person present with each animal to help manage interactions.
- **Provide your dog with an activity** to avoid fixating on the cat; this could be a food puzzle, snuffle mat, target training game, or something else your dog finds enjoyable and calming.
- **Provide your cat with an elevated hiding spot** so they can safely observe the dog if they choose to.
- **Reinforce calm behaviours** with high value treats. Your cat may enjoy some interactive play with a string toy or a targeting exercise to focus on.
- Ensure your dog is wearing a harness and is attached to a long and loose lead.
- **Keep these interactions brief** and end the session if either animal shows signs of stress or fear.
- Gradually reduce the space between your pets during these interactions.



Additional Resources:

<https://icatcare.org/advice/introducing-a-cat-or-kitten-to-your-dog/>

<https://www.praiseworthy pets.com/podcast-shownotes/control-unleashed-with-cats-and-dogs>

Bradshaw, J. and Ellis, S. (2016). The Trainable Cat, Chapter 6 - Cats and Other Pets

06

Supervised Time Together

- **Ensure your dog is wearing their harness and is on a long loose lead.**
- Remove the barrier and allow your cat to enter the dog's space if they wish. Be patient and respect your cat's choice - **avoid picking up and moving your cat.** It may take several tries before your cat is ready to enter your dog's space.
- Provide your dog with calming activities to engage with while your cat moves around the space; simple targeting exercises, pattern games, snuffle mats, or food puzzles are good options.
- **Your dog will benefit from some key skills prior to meeting your cat without a barrier:** 'sit', 'stay', 'look at that' and 'go to place' are likely to be helpful. Make sure to have plenty of high value reinforcers on hand.
- Ensure that your cat has access to multiple escape routes and vertical spaces.
- Lure your cat back to their safe space by using high value treats or an interactive toy.

Tip: Though a long loose lead is essential to ensure safety, avoid keeping your dog on a tight leash during introductions.



07

Unsupervised Time Together

If both animals are **consistently** relaxed and calm during extended periods of supervised time, they may eventually share spaces without your constant supervision.

Managing Expectations:

- **Be patient** and proceed at a pace that both pets feel comfortable with – each step may take several weeks or more.
- Some pets may never fully bond, and that is okay. The goal may simply be for them to coexist. **Some animals may require having their own spaces long term or permanently.**



When Things Don't Go as Planned

If your dog shows concerning behaviours toward your cat, or either animal is showing signs of significant stress, return both pets to their designated safe spaces and **get in touch with our behaviour team for further support.**

**The Lost Dogs Home Animal Behaviour & Training Team:
03 8379 4470**