



THE
LOST DOGS
HOME.

What You Need to Know: Introducing Adopted Dogs & Resident Cats

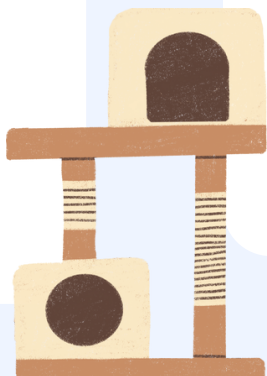
A slow and gradual introduction will ensure the safety of both your pets and is more likely to result in an amicable relationship. Keep in mind, this process may take several weeks or months.

01

Prior to Adoption

- **Set up a safe zone for your resident cat** with all their essentials: food, water, bedding, litter tray, a scratching surface, and favourite toys. This space should also have multiple accessible hiding spots and vertical spaces to perch. Ideally this space is one where your resident cat already feels comfortable spending time and is inaccessible to your newly adopted dog.
- **Set up a separate space for your new dog** before they arrive. Gradually introduce novel items like dog crates, beds, and toys prior to adoption so your cat can become familiar with these items in advance.

Tip: Aim to **maintain your cat's routine** as much as possible throughout this process. If your cat isn't used to being confined to an area in the home, you may wish to trial this prior to adopting your dog.



02

Bringing Your Dog Home

Tip: House your cat in their safe space prior to your adoption appointment. Provide them with an enjoyable activity like an interactive toy, cat TV, a food puzzle, or foraging box.

Decompression Time:

Introduce your dog to their designated space while keeping your resident cat in their own area. Allow plenty of time for your new dog to settle and become familiar with their new routine and family members. This might take days, weeks, or longer. Every animal is different!

- **Give your cat extra enrichment:** treats, playtime, catnip, pats if they enjoy them. This will help them associate your new pet with positive experiences.
- **Build a predictable routine for your dog** so they can anticipate when to exercise, rest, play, and eat.

03

Scent Swapping

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

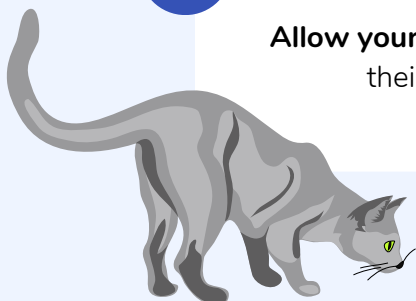
- **Collect your pet's scent** by placing a washcloth or other soft item in their preferred resting area for 2-3 days.
- Place this item in the other pet's space – avoid placing the new scent too close to your pet, instead allow them to approach when they are ready.
- **Monitor your pet's response;** 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.



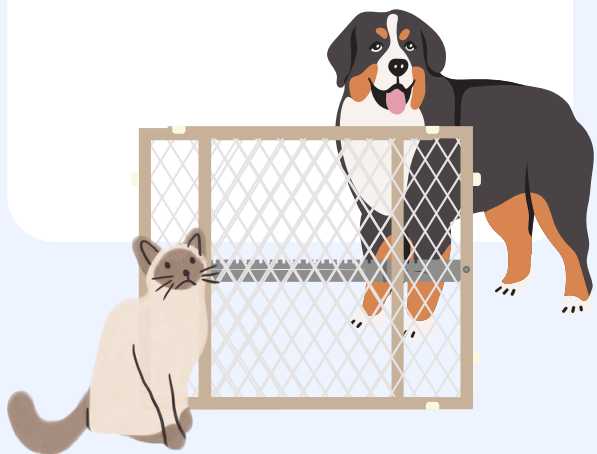
Important: Only move to the next step in the introduction process when both animals are calm and showing relaxed body language.

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.



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 towards your cat during their introduction, return both pets to their designated safe spaces and get in touch with The Lost Dogs Home for further support.

If either animal is showing signs of significant stress please **get in touch with our behaviour team for further support.**

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

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