



Introducing dogs and cats

Bringing a new puppy home is exciting - for you, but your cat will detest the upset to their previously well-ordered life. Even if your cat has been used to living with a dog, the new puppy is likely to upset your cat at first. Allowing the new puppy to chase your cat may create a mistrust that can last for life. Cats love routine and need to feel safe in their home, so the invasion of a new canine can trigger various stress behaviours, such as spraying urine, leaving “presents” dotted around, or even leaving home altogether.

It's worth doing some preparation to help the arrival of your new puppy as calm and harmonious as possible. Here's what you can do:

Think scent

Cats, like dogs, gain their information principally through scent. Before your new puppy's paws even cross your threshold, introduce the new scent to your cat. Take a cloth with you when you visit your new puppy at the breeders and use it to stroke the puppy. Bring it home and wipe it on your furniture, door frames, and even your own hands, before stroking your cat, so your cat sees the puppy scent as familiar before they arrive.

Once your puppy is home, spend lots of time stroking your cat before immediately stroking your puppy, so he then smells familiar to your cat – this helps your cat recognise him as part of the family.

Food

Decide where you are going to feed your puppy and your cat. Cat food on the floor will be eaten by the puppy – and cat food is not suitable for dogs. If you currently feed your cat on the floor, get her into a new habit of eating up on a high surface, which will help her feel secure and safe while she eats.

Litter problems

Cat poo is a doggy delicacy. Make sure you place the litter tray in a place where your cat cannot be ambushed while performing – this is a nightmare for any sentient being – and where your puppy can't find a free, unhygienic snack. Put the tray somewhere only your cat can access, behind a cat flap, or a baby gate.

Safety platforms

Cats work out very quickly that where they can go, puppies cannot always follow. Make sure they have places high up where they can go to sit and look down on the new puppy in their superior, feline way. Give her access to window sills, shelving units or bookcases, where you won't be worried about ornaments getting knocked or where your cat might struggle to climb up or jump down.

Control the puppy

Make sure your puppy never gets a chance to chase your cat, either in the house or the garden. The easiest way to do this is to set up baby gates or barriers in your home that your cat can get through but your puppy can't. Keep your pup on a lead or house line when you're able to supervise interactions and train your puppy to settle calmly when the cat is around.

Ask for help

Despite your best efforts, your cat and dog still don't get on. This might be because your cat is very anxious or fearful, and is hiding the whole time, or it may be because your new dog shows an inherent desire to chase your cat. Don't delay. Please ask us for help – for you, your cat and your dog's sake.