



Cat-to-Dog Introductions

Protocol Detail:

Check in with client days 3, 7 and 10 and 14 and 21 (30 days out if needed) to get progress. Coach on anything they need to modify.

General Time Frames (stay on the level past the recommended timeline if see even the slightest sign of concern – would go over signs/behaviors to look for that indicate stress/anxiety/aggression -- body language, vocalizations, etc.). Move back to the previous “level” making sure to keep using the extremely yummy treats (i.e., salmon, chicken, tuna) and do a few more times at previous level before trying to move to the next level again.

Preventing “mistakes” – Do not move the introduction along too quickly – rushing the process is the most common mistake people make during the introductory process.

Days 1-3 (complete separation)

First and foremost is prevention and not allowing for negative interactions.

Cat to be confined in one area with all necessities (litter box, food, water, toys, bed, scratching post, etc.)

Play music (Through a Dog’s Ear for the dog and Mood Music for Cats: A Ball of Twine for kitties) – do this a few hours each day

Animals unable to get to one another, including through the cracks under the doors.

Visual blocks (doors closed)

Scent blocks (as much as possible) -- Baby gate several feet away from door of room cat is in

Use Feliway (spray in room 2X/Day) or plug-in – in the cat’s room

Continue to exercise the Dog daily (2X/day)

Mental exercise for Dog daily (feed out of busy toy/Kong-type toy and/or hide portion of meals around the house to scavage)

Play time with cat (2-3X/day for 15-20 minutes each time). Give cat other items to play with as well as appropriate scratching surfaces (vertical and horizontal, since we don’t know the cat’s preference).

Nutrition – what is each animal being fed (want quality nutrition, along with food with moisture in it – canned, raw, refrigerated, vegetables, meats, etc.)

Days 4-7 (start slow introductory process)

Continue above for exercise/play and Feliway (for cat)

Play music for everyone to hear for a few hours a day

Swap scents (bedding, t-shirts they've laid on, etc.) between the animals

Allow the cat to explore other areas of the home while being supervised (with dog confined outside or other room without any visual access to one another). This will allow the cat to get to know the house, as well as pick up the scent of the dog throughout the home. (2-3 X/Day for 5-10 minutes each time)

Days 8-10 (continued introductory process)

Continue above for exercise/play and Feliway

Play music for everyone to hear for a few hours a day

Continue to allow cat to explore (supervised) the home, and put dog in the cat's room when cat is exploring remainder of house

Move gate away and keep door closed so that they can smell one another through the door, and look under the door at one another. Continue as long as cat and dog do not display any fearful, aggressive, or anxious behavior toward one another. Ideally, we want to see friendly behavior.

- Use toys, treats (tuna, chicken or salmon!), calm/relaxing petting as long as the animals aren't being threatening or anxious toward one another.

Days 11-14

Start allowing them to see one another through baby gates. May want to have two baby gates at a distance from one another (one in doorway and one a little further down the hall placed 8-12 feet from other gate)

- Give yummy treats, toys, play, happy talk, pets – anything they each love – in the presence of one another
 - o Do this for several minutes 2-3 times/day

Days 15-20

If all has gone well through baby gates, it is time to do same-room introductions.

Try both options (each one 1-2 times the first day – only for a few minutes each time!). Keep a sufficient distance between the two animals to help reduce any fear, aggression, anxiety or over-excitement. Throughout the introduction, give yummy treats, toys, play, happy talk, pets – anything they each love – in the presence of one another

Option One: If the dog or the cat are used to being crated, put one animal in the crate while the other roams around in the same room.

- If cat is crated and dog is loose, cover the crate initially so that only one side is exposed.
 - o Move close enough to crate so that they are aware of one another, but nobody is reacting to one another. Have dog sit, down or sit/stay down/stay and give yummy rewards.
 - o Give cat rewards through the crate as well.
- If the dog is crated, covering one side can also be helpful during the introduction.

- Encourage the cat to approach the dog's crate as long as the dog is being calm
 - Continue giving the cat treats/petting/happy talk so that he is not fearful
- Option Two: Put Dog on a leash and allow cat to roam around in the same room.
- Use training cues (i.e., sit, down, sit/stay and down/stay for Dog when giving rewards and to help dog be calmer/more relaxed in the presence of the cat.) Use these training cues and reward dog with treats for sitting or lying down at a distance from the cat. Rewards are for not trying to chase or charge at the cat.
 - Do this for several minutes 2-3 times/day
 - Be especially careful when the cat starts moving around. The dog should be on a down/stay when the cat is not in the crate. Give the dog LOTS of treats when the cat is in motion.

20+ Days

Keep working at this level (with one of them confined/leashed) until both animals can be calm when close to each other. Allow each to sniff the other (muzzle the dog if you are concerned – will have gotten dog used to muzzle ahead of time using muzzle acclimation process). It is best NOT to hold the cat during the introduction, as becoming frightened (which we've already seen with this cat!) can lead scratching and/or biting.

All interactions should be supervised. Start out with short periods of time, then progress to longer time periods (with you always present!). Do not allow the animals to be alone together until you see friendly behavior toward one another (consistently) for at least a week.

Punishment – Punishment should not be used for inappropriate behavior. If used more than occasionally, punishment can cause one or both animals to associate bad things with the presence of the other. This can create problems which can result in fearful and/or aggressive behavior.

What to do:

- If the cat swats the dog when the dog approaches, do not scold either animal. Instead, have the dog sit or lie down.
- If the dog chases the cat, use an interruptive sound (hand clap and saying "hey" at the same time) to try to interrupt the chasing. If this does the trick, get the dog to sit or come to you, praise and reward. If not, calmly remove the dog and go several feet away from the cat, then have the dog sit or down and reward.
- If problems continue to occur, back up to a previous step in the introductory process.

For the Cat:

- Cats (and some cats) can back off a dog with hissing, growling and swatting. If the dog is responsive and backs away, praise the dog and reward. An appropriate response from the dog is to either move away or try to initiate play with the cat. If the dog gets more reactive (wants to attack or gets very stiff and/or stares) immediately remove the dog from the situation. This is concerning and you should call your behavior consultant immediately.
- It is important not to allow the dog to “harass” the cat. We do not want the cat afraid to move around. If this starts to happen, contact your behavior consultant. Also, it is important to give the cat options to get away from the dog (i.e., high places to retreat to, access into rooms/areas the dog cannot go (baby gate off the ground enough for cat to get under but not dog, closet doors cracked for cat to get into but not dog, etc.)

If you have any questions or concerns during this introductory process, please contact the Sacramento SPCA Behavior and Training Department – behavior@sspca.org or 916-504-2848.