

CARE SHEET

Developed with and approved by a Qualified Veterinarian

Cats and dogs don't have to be mortal enemies. Although a few dogs may never truly be safe around cats, properly introducing your dog and cat will go a long way towards bringing peace to your household.

How training works

Dogs are pack animals, and as such are only comfortable when their role within the pack has been established. An established role allows the dog to predict the reactions and needs of the rest of his pack. Without a confirmed, consistent role, the dog never knows when punishment or rewards will fall his way, and will spend most of his time anxious and worried.

Basic obedience helps to establish the owner in role of pack leader, and lays down clear behavior guidelines that the pack can follow. The lack of a clear pack leader will cause anxiety, since, in the eyes of a dog, only a strong and definite pack leader can protect the pack and provide it with whatever is needed. If none of the humans take this role, the dog is forced to attempt to assume it himself, since the pack **must** have a leader. The pack leader controls where the pack goes, when and what the pack eats and how the pack behaves toward one another. Having these clear guidelines allows the dog to relax, since he knows what behaviors earn what types of attention.

Most trainers follow the 3 second rule in training. Dogs will attribute positive or negative attention to whatever was happening within the 3 seconds immediately before the attention was given. Be careful to only give your dog attention when appropriate, when current behavior, not past, deserves it. If your dog is growling at strangers, don't reward the behavior by attempting to calm him. This merely reinforces that there must be something scary happening. Instead, a gentle "no", and a friendly greeting of the stranger on your part will be more reassuring to the dog than your calming attempts.

Know Your Dog

Dogs fall into one of 3 categories when meeting a new cat:

- They ignore it completely
- They are very excited and interested at first, but learn to get along with the cat, or quickly become bored with it
- They never quit chasing the cat and may even hurt it

Dogs that fall into the third category should not be kept in homes with cats. Certain breeds, such as sight hounds (greyhounds, afghan hounds, etc) and some terriers, are generally not recommended with cats, although individuals may be trustworthy.

Before the Introductions

If you are bringing a new dog or puppy into a home with a cat, make changes in the cat's environment well in advance of the dog's arrival. This way, your cat won't blame the dog for what she sees as unnecessary upheaval. For instance: move the cat's bowls onto a counter or the washing machine where the new dog can't reach them. Dogs are very attracted to cat food, due to its higher fat content and flavor. They are also attracted to cat feces. Make certain that both the cat's food dish and litter box are well out of your new dog's reach, but still accessible to your cat. Your cat won't get as stressed if these changes in her surroundings occur gradually.

If you are bringing a new kitten or cat into your dog's home, get the supplies for the cat or kitten in advance, and teach your dog that these items are off limits. Your cat will need a safe spot up high where she can get away from the dog and watch what's going on. This could be on top of the fridge, dresser, or cat tree. Once the cat is comfortable watching from a distance, she will gradually get curious and come down to investigate. Do not try to rush this process. Your cat's comfort depends on being able to adjust at her own pace.

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The Homecoming

When you first bring your new dog or cat home, confine her to a private room with the door shut. Let the old and new pets sniff each other under the door. Do not allow the dog to dig at the door, or to stand and bark constantly. If the dog will not stop, this may not be a good candidate for a cat-owning household.

Place towels or beds that smell like the cat in the dog's area, and vice versa. When the dog is outside, allow the cat to roam the dog's area, investigating the dog's scent. Return the cat to her area before the dog comes back in. Then the dog will be able to smell the scent the cat left in his area.

The Introduction

After a day or so, place a leash on the dog, and open the door between the cat and dog. Allow the cat to come out on her own schedule. Don't force the introductions. Keep your dog leashed and tied at your side or in a wire crate where he can watch your cat, but not get to her. He may get real excited, and this step may take a few days, but gradually Kitty will get closer and Rover will get used to her being around.

Keep your dog on a leash in the house at all times so he won't chase your cat. If your dog can't chase her, then your cat doesn't need to run. Once the running and chasing begin, it's a hard habit to break. It is just too much fun for the dog! Your cat won't need to run if she feels safe.

Distract an excited dog with treats and toys or a trip outside until he calms down. You can also ask him to comply with some obedience commands to get his focus off the cat and onto you. If he lunges towards the cat, hold tight to the leash and correct him with a loud "LEAVE IT!" or "NO KITTY!" You don't have to be mad, just sound firm and in control. This is not a request. It is a command. You are the pack leader who makes the rules, and he is expected to listen. Reward him profusely when he returns his attention back to you, even if only for an instant.

Your dog learns by your tone of voice and the consequences he experiences. Both the cat, he gets corrected; turn to you, he gets praise, happy talk and fun. Go way overboard with the praise at first, so it's absolutely clear to your dog what you want.

Never let your dog loose with your cat unless your cat has quit running off, and your dog shows no interest in chasing. Gradually the two will get used to each other, and you can relax the rules a bit. They may never be best friends, but they can learn to tolerate each other politely. Who knows, they may **both** be sleeping on your bed soon!

Suggested Reading

Dogs for Dummies by Gina Spadafori

Cats for Dummies By Gina Spadafori and Paul P. Dion, D.V.M.

How To Get Your Dog To Do What You Want by Warren Eckstein

How to Get Your Cat to Do What You Want by Warren Eckstein