

Make a Good Introduction

Help your cat and dog get along by introducing them properly.

Tom Schreck

Larry Lachman, Psy.D., an animal behavior consultant in Carmel, Calif., recommends these five tips to achieve a successful introduction and a lasting friendship between a cat and a dog:

1. Protect the cat's feeding area and litterbox from the dog by elevating them out of the dog's reach or putting them in a room inaccessible to the dog.
2. Crate the dog or puppy when first introduced to the cat. Let the cat investigate its new friend without the fear of being chased or trampled.
3. Offer praise and food treats to the cat in the dog's presence whenever it approaches the dog. These actions help both the dog and cat develop positive associations with in the presence of one another.
4. Allow your crated dog to sniff the cat and be sure to praise and treat the dog for good behavior.
5. After a month, gradually allow the dog a bit more freedom. You can switch the dog from a crate to a short leash. Remember to praise and treat both when they behave positively in each other's company. After a month of consistent behavior under these conditions, you may remove the dog's leash. Should any problems arise, you can back up a step or two in the process to reinforce the importance of appropriate behavior.