**How To Properly Introduce A Cat To A Dog**

Many families end up wanting both cats and dogs, but don’t necessarily make this decision simultaneously. So the family goes out, finds a puppy, and brings it home. Maybe a few months, or even a year or two later, they decide they want to add a cat to the household. While it is certainly possible to add a cat to a household that already has a dog, it must be done properly to ensure the safety and happiness of both animals. The easiest way, of course, is to adopt a cat and a dog at the same time and when they are both very young, and then raise them together. Since it doesn’t always work out that way, this article is going to tell you how to properly introduce a cat to your household when you already have a dog.

**Prepare and Educate Yourself**

Before you begin any sort of introduction, you must take the time to completely educate yourself on the best approach, It’s also important to note that this is a process; it isn’t something that can be done in 30 minutes. You have to make sure you are prepared to be patient, because the last thing you want is to introduce your new cat too quickly. If it is done too quickly and not properly, there could be problems for the rest of their lives.

**Find Your Cat its Own Room**

Once you bring the cat home, make sure you have a room set up that will be exclusively for the cat. Bring the cat inside using a carrier and go directly to this room. You should have this room set up with everything the cat is going to need: food, water, litter box, toys, and anything else you think your cat may want. Whatever room you decide to use for your new cat should be one that the dog doesn’t use or have access to. For example, if your dog always sleeps with you at night, you don’t want to choose to put your new cat in your bedroom. Allow the dog and cat to sniff each other under the door, but keep the door closed and make sure the cat cannot get out of the room. It is important to let the dog get a chance to smell the cat before you fully introduce them to each other.

**Put Up a Baby Gate**

The next step is to introduce the dog and cat face-to-face, but without them being able to actually interact with each other. Put up some sort of tall gate in the doorway of the room that you chose for your new cat, and open the door. Again, the goal of this is to let them both get a sense of each other and let them adjust to their new surroundings, which of course includes adjusting to the presence of each other. When to move on to the next step is going to depend on how your dog (and cat) reacts. If you open the door and the dog is overly excited or becomes agitated or upset, you want to limit the exposure. Shut the door and try again a bit later. When you first open the door, you should try to get your dog to focus on something other than the cat. Get out your dog’s favorite toy, feed the dog as you are opening the door, or do something else that the dog enjoys.

The purpose of this is twofold: first, we want your dog to adjust to the cat gradually and not get so excited that he can’t behave himself. Second, this helps the dog associate the presence of the cat with something positive: food, playtime, or treats. If you do this enough times, your dog will learn that the cat’s presence is a good thing, not a bad thing. He won’t stop getting food, treats, or playtime just because you’ve introduced someone else into the household. The goal is to have your dog eventually lose interest in the cat anytime you open the door and they can see each other face to face. This part of the introduction could take days, weeks, or even months.

Again, it is fully dependent on your dog and your new cat. If your dog is just too excited anytime it sees the cat, you can now start bringing something from the cat’s room outside of the bedroom. Bring a blanket or a toy out that the cat has used, which allows the dog to get used to the scent of the cat without having the overstimulation of actually seeing the cat. This can help move the process along.

**Real Face to Face Introduction**

The next step is to actually let the cat out into the rest of the house. This can be a scary thing, so take your time and only do this once you’re comfortable and confident that your dog is ready. You can start by letting the cat out while having your dog on a leash and giving your dog a lot of attention. Have your dog do simple commands like sit and stay, and then reward him with treats. This helps show your dog that the new member of your family is not a threat. Once the dog is calm and realizes that nothing bad is happening, you can decide to take the leash off of your dog. Only do this when the dog is calm and you’re comfortable that both the dog and cat are ready for this type of introduction.

The most important thing to remember is to be patient. This introduction can take a lot of time to do properly. You want to make sure that both the dog and cat are happy and comfortable with each other.