Introducing Dogs to Cats & Small Pets

FOSTERS & ADOPTERS

Safety first

A dog-friendly dog is not necessarily cat-safe. Predatory behavior may be silent and sudden. Never test compatibility by allowing a chase.

Protect the cat

Provide a dog-free room, secure litter and feeding stations, elevated escape options, and freedom to retreat. Begin with closed-door separation and scent exchange.

Controlled exposure

When the dog can remain calm, use secure barriers and a leash for brief visual exposure. Reward calm behavior and disengagement. Never force nose-to-nose meetings or hold a cat near the dog.

Warning signs

Fixated staring, stalking, trembling with intense focus, lunging, repeated chasing, or inability to disengage. Stop exposure and seek professional guidance; some combinations cannot safely cohabit.

Other small animals

Birds, rabbits, rodents, and similar animals should remain securely separated. Their vulnerability means ordinary dog-cat introduction steps may not be appropriate.

Unsupervised time

Maintain physical separation whenever an adult cannot actively manage interactions. A baby gate alone may not stop a determined dog.