

## NO NEED TO FIGHT LIKE CATS AND DOGS!



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All animals need to feel that they live in a safe and predictable environment. When combining cats and dogs in the same household, this is particularly important. There are risks of injury – even death – when you have a multi-species war zone going on under your roof.

Here we'll focus on households that already have cat(s) and dog(s) who live together but could use some help to improve their relationship.

Creating a safe area for each is your first priority. Your cat should have an area that your dog cannot access. This can be accomplished by using baby gates, cutting out a cat-sized hole in a door to a room, or a supplying higher ground that the cat can get to, like a well-grounded cat tree.

I live with three dogs and three cats, and I have a cutout for the cats in the door to my basement, so they can retreat to there. I also keep my litter boxes and cat food in the basement, so the dogs cannot get to them.

Your dog should not be allowed to chase your cat. Dogs love to chase, and your cat running away will reinforce your dog's desire to chase it. If your dog has already developed the habit of cat-chasing, then you will need to keep your dog on a leash when your cat is around to prevent the behaviour. Reward your dog for remaining calm around your cat. If your dog is off-



leash, your cat should be in her safe place. Behaviours that are good to reward your dog for around your cats are sits, downs, and focusing on you. Practise lots of recalls with your dog around your cat and reward him generously. Before your dog even goes to chase your cat, ask him to come and reward him.

Putting a bell on both your dog's and cat's collars will prevent them from having the opportunity to sneak up on each other, which should discourage chasing and other unwanted behaviours.

You should also make sure that you are meeting the needs of both of your pets. Keep their minds active and engaged by feeding them using food-dispensing toys. Make sure they both get plenty of exercise. If your cat has her front claws, keep them trimmed. Practice mat work with both of them. Have a mat for each and reward them generously when they go to their mat and stay there.

Look for triggers that cause either of them to feel uncomfortable in the other's presence. My pug will only chase a cat if he is on my lap and the cat comes into the room. In that scenario, I simply remove my pug from my lap

and gently place him beside me on the couch. Other triggers can be guarding food or toys.

You can also try products that are designed to help both species feel calm. Adaptil is for dogs and feliaway is for cats. Both are scented products that you can plug into any electrical outlet.

Teach both your cat and your dog that good things happen in each other's presence and that it is possible for you to play with both at the same time. When my cats come up to me for attention, I will immediately start throwing a toy for my dogs to fetch. You can give treats to both while they are separated by a baby gate. That way they will make a positive association with each other's presence. You should also supervise them when they are in the same space so you can reward them for interacting nicely and interrupt them if you need to.

Cats and dogs can definitely learn to enjoy each other's company, as long as they feel safe and protected while they are together. You will know that you are having success when both animals can be in the same room together and remain calm.

Good luck and happy training!