



Adding a New Pet to Your Home

Bringing a new cat or dog into the household can be a delight but it can also be tumultuous. Discover how to help a newcomer make a nimble entrance.

Animals are emotional and territorial creatures, and one of the strongest emotions they experience is jealousy. If you have a dog or cat accustomed to being the head pet of the house, introducing a new member can stir up trouble.

But if you're willing to be patient, there's good news: Although a newcomer may initially raise hackles, most pets come to accept one another. In the best-case scenario, they bond. But don't expect all to become best friends; some simply develop an indifferent tolerance.

All animals from Homeless & Helpless have been given a clean bill of health and has been spayed or neutered. The only exception to this is if the animal is too young and a follow-up to make sure that they do get "fixed" when it's time! The animals have also been socialized with our "welcoming committee" so they understand how to live in a pack. We also feed the animals together so there is no food aggression. All animals who come through our house are potty trained too!

JUST FOR CATS

Create a safe, temporary home for a new cat to get used to the surroundings. If you have a spare room or bathroom, that's ideal. If not, an oversize dog kennel can work. Furnish it with a litter box and a safe, warm spot for the cat to sleep. Devote a corner to food and water, and add a scratching post and a toy to let the newcomer know it is welcome. Don't allow other pets in.



Before you debut the new kitty, trim both cats' nails. When you introduce the newcomer, place her at a distance from your original cat. Avoid contact with both, and speak in a calming voice.

Sniffing, hissing, and vocalization may take place — and that's fine. Just don't allow fighting. If that ensues, separate the cats and re-introduce them in a day or two. Cuddle and play with each cat separately during this transitional period.

DOGS & CATS

Fully supervise the introduction, keeping the dog on the leash so that you can pull back if one or the other pet becomes aggressive or there's a danger of the dog being clawed. Also, make sure the cat has an escape route. In most instances, both animals will do a lot of sniffing to acquaint themselves with each other's scent. Reward them for staying calm; separate them if they become combative.

JUST FOR DOGS

Dogs are social animals, and every pack has a hierarchy. Yours will sort out which is the leader of the pack if you give them a chance. Start by bringing both dogs to a neutral location, such as a park. Ask a friend to handle one of the dogs, keep both on leashes, and let the dogs approach one another.

Just as you would let a dog sniff one he encounters on a walk, do so here... briefly. Then separate the dogs, give each a brief walk, command them to sit or lie down, then praise and reward them with a treat. Then bring them back together to calmly reacquaint.

If they assume a playful position, you're in luck; your dogs soon will be pals. If you observe aggression or timidity, back away with the dog and repeat the walk, command and reward.

Continue to allow the dogs to interact for short periods of time. Once they tolerate one another, bring them home. Give each dog his own water and food bowl, bed and toys. Confine them in separate areas whenever you leave and avoid making one jealous of the other by being more attentive.

Animals in Costa Rica live without fences so their socialization with other animals takes place from an early age. The information above is to help you understand that animals will "work it out for themselves" but you can aid in the introduction of your new family members. Thank you for supporting Homeless & Helpless!

