

You should keep the cat food out of the dog's reach.

- Why dogs like to "raid" the litter box is not well understood, but eating cat feces is a relatively common behavior. Although there are no health hazards to the dog from the habit, it is usually distasteful to owners. Do not "booby trap" the litter box, as this will keep the cat away as well. Place the litter box where the dog can't access it, such as behind a baby gate or in a room with the door anchored just wide enough for the cat.
- Because they're so much smaller, kittens are in more danger of being injured or killed by a young energetic dog, or by a predatory dog. A kitten will need to be kept separate from an especially energetic dog until she is fully grown, except for periods of supervised interaction to enable the animals to get to know each other.

Source: Suzanne Hetts Ph.D. for the Denver Dumb Friends League



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**Escondido Humane Society**

## **Dogs and cats: Living in perfect harmony**

**How to introduce your  
new feline to the  
resident canine**



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**The Escondido Humane Society  
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10 a.m. to 5 p.m. seven days a week.**

## Introducing your new cat to the resident dog

Dogs usually want to chase and play with cats. Cats are usually afraid and defensive. The following steps can ease an introduction of a new cat into the resident dog's home.

- The dog should know or be taught the commands "sit," "down," "come" and "stay." Use food rewards for success with a command.
- The cat should be kept in an area that is separate until the introduction is successful. Switch the cat and dog's bedding so they can smell each other.
- Feed them on opposite sides of the room while controlling the dog on a leash.

After the animals have become comfortable eating on either side of the room and have been exposed to each other's scents, you can attempt a face-to-face

introduction in a **controlled** manner. Put the dog's leash on and command him to either "sit" or "down" and "stay," using food tidbits as reward. Have another family member enter the room and quietly sit down with the cat in their lap. If the cat does not like to be held, you can use a wire cage or carrier instead of holding the cat. The cat should be offered tidbits. Start on **opposite** sides of the room. Repeat this step several times until both the cat and dog are tolerating each other without fear, aggression or uncontrolled behavior.

Next, move the animals a little closer together, with the dog still on the leash and the cat gently held (or in a carrier). If the dog gets up from its "stay" position, it should be firmly repositioned and praised and rewarded for obeying the "stay" command. If the cat becomes frightened, increase the distance between the animals and progress more slowly. Eventually, the animals should be brought close enough together to

allow them to investigate each other.

Your dog must be taught that chasing or being rough with the cat is unacceptable behavior. He must be taught to behave appropriately and be rewarded for doing so. If your dog is always punished whenever the cat is around and never has good things happen in the cat's presence, your dog may redirect aggression toward the cat.

You may want to keep your dog on a leash and with you when the cat is free in the house during the introduction process. Be sure that the cat has an escape route and a high place to hide. Keep the dog and the cat separated when you aren't home until you are certain the cat will be safe.

### Precautions

- Dogs like to eat cat food because it is very high in protein and therefore very tasty.