



Setting up for success – creating a safe space for your cat

Give your cat a home base with everything they need. This space needs to be a place that the dog cannot access.

The cat's safe space needs to include:

- 🌿 Litter tray
- 🌿 Food and water bowls
- 🌿 Comfortable bedding
- 🌿 Scratching post
- 🌿 Toys

Setting up for success – preparation and training

The dog should not be able to access the cat's safe space. You can use baby gates, as long as your dog cannot jump them. Or you can close doors to secure your cat separately. If you have a small dog or puppy you can use a crate and an exercise pen as long as they are sturdy enough to keep both the dog and cat safe and divided.

You will need to invest time into training your dog to remain calm around your cat. You will also need to train your cat to build trust in you and in your dog.

For your dog:

- 🌿 Book into an RSPCA dog training class or look up the Force Free Trainers List for trainers in your area. These classes will teach you how to teach your dog foundation behaviours for remaining calm around your cat.
- 🌿 Training name recognition, sit and recalls in many varied environments will help your dog build reliability. Start in low distraction environments, such as your home, away from your cat's safe space.
- 🌿 You will need high value treats and your dog's harness and lead to begin training.





For your cat:

- 🌿 You will need to have some high value food, such as tuna, for your cat to lick and eat while you are working with your dog.

How long will you need to train your dog and cat?

In the first few weeks of bringing your new dog or cat home they should not have free access to each other.

Both animals are learning how to get along and if you are not there to manage and train them they are likely to make mistakes that will make it harder for you to train them to get along.

In those first few weeks, both animals can still smell each other and know that the other animal is in the house. This is the first step of teaching them how to live together. You can play with your dog in the backyard and let your cat out to explore the house and where the dog has been. Alternatively, you can allow your dog to sniff any bedding the cat may have been using (without the cat present) and begin to teach them how to be calm in the presence of your cat.

There is no rule about how long it will take to introduce a dog and cat to each other. It is important that you do not rush the process and slowly build up their skills. Watch for body language and behaviour indicators to assess both animals and how the relationship is progressing.

Reading canine body language and behaviour

When your dog sees your cat you want to look for:

- 🌿 Soft relaxed body
- 🌿 Open mouth
- 🌿 Neutral tail
- 🌿 If you give your dog a cue, such as sit, the dog can listen and perform the behaviour with ease.





Signs your dog is too aroused and will need more training to interact with the cat:

- ❁ Closed mouth
- ❁ Staring at the cat
- ❁ Tense body
- ❁ Pricked up, forward ears with a wrinkled forehead
- ❁ High, stiff tail, may be wagging

Reading feline body language and behaviour

Your cat is calm and settled when:

- ❁ They are eating freely
- ❁ They may look at your dog through the barrier and sniff towards them

Signs your cat is not feeling comfortable with your dog:

- ❁ Yawning
- ❁ Cowering and hiding
- ❁ Avoiding looking at your dog
- ❁ Tail bristling
- ❁ Flattened ears
- ❁ Large dilated pupils
- ❁ Hissing, spitting and swiping out at your dog

You will need to work more on the relationship between your dog and cat. Move your dog away from your cat.

You will need one on one training with a qualified trainer if you are struggling with either animal relaxing in the other's company.

Initial introductions with your dog and cat

- ❁ Set your cat up in their safe space (behind a baby gate or screen door) with a tasty treat they have to spend at least 5–10 minutes eating.





- 🌿 Have your dog on their lead and harness and their tasty rewards ready to reinforce any calm behaviours.
- 🌿 Take your dog a safe distance away from your cat's safe space and begin practicing behaviours such as name recognition, sit and recall.
- 🌿 As long as your cat is comfortable and eating and your dog is responding to cues and remaining calm, move closer to the cat's safe space and continue practicing.
- 🌿 When you are confident your dog is listening to you and can perform the behaviours in the presence of the cat you can open the barrier (while your dog is on lead) and see if your cat is willing to come out and if your dog can remain calm.

If your dog cannot perform these behaviours while in view of the cat or is showing any of the above signs of arousal then stop the training session. You need more practice on the behaviour and possibly more distance. You should contact a professional for help with the training of both animals.

When to move along in your training

If you can call your dog away from a short distance and their response to your cat is calm

If your dog can relax and settle when they can see your cat.

If your cat is calm and relaxed, eating freely and interested in interacting with your dog.

Where to find more help and advice

<https://www.rspcasa.org.au/services/dog-services/dog-training/>

RSPCA SA offers dog training classes and one on one training all over Adelaide. Go to our dog training page and register your interest. Our one on one trainers can help you manage your dog's behaviour with up to date scientifically effective methods.





<https://www.rspcasa.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/FF-Trainers-List-Update-Jan-2019.pdf>

RSPCA SA have a list of qualified force free trainers all over Adelaide. They offer many different services such as group classes and in home consultations.

This list also include a list of Veterinary Behaviourists that can help you with your pet's medical needs.

What to do if you can no longer care for your pet

If at any time during your pet's life you can no longer care for them, please return them to our care.

