

NEW YEAR, New Addition to the Household?

If you have resolved to provide your pet with companionship by bringing another fur friend into your household this year, this month is a perfect time to realize that goal! While your cat or dog might appreciate having a same-species buddy, it can be beneficial to mix things up by pairing a dog with a cat. For the best possible outcome, it is generally recommended that the new canine or feline companion is younger and of the opposite sex than the family's established pet.



Conventional wisdom has it that welcoming a puppy into a home with a family cat is easier because puppies tend to be smaller and less threatening to felines than full-grown dogs. When making this decision, take the resident cat's maturity and activity level into account. A puppy has greater energy and drive to play, so a more mature, sedate dog may be a better fit with an older, less active feline.

When adding Fido to a family with an established feline, experts advise that careful consideration be given to the potential pup's breed, among other factors. Hound dogs, like beagles or bassets, tend to accept cats as part of the "pack." Bred to be gentle when handling animals, bird dogs and retrievers make excellent choices as well. Breeds that may pose more of a challenge with felines are terriers, sighthounds such as Afghans, greyhounds and whippets, and herding varieties like collies, sheepdogs and shepherds. With a mixed pedigree pooch, its ancestry may give some indication of how well Fido will get along with Fluffy. While these tips may help you to find a breed that's typically a better fit with cats, rely on your best judgment when finding the right dog, as every animal has its own unique personality and behavioral quirks.

When adopting from a shelter or rescue group, ask if any information is on file about the pet's previous history with other fur friends and people. Also, many of these facilities have meet-and-greet rooms, which allow prospective owners to bring in their children and current pets to get acquainted with the potential adoptee, increasing the odds of finding the right fit for their entire families. If buying directly from a breeder, ask how the pup or kitten has been socialized because reputable breeders often make sure to acclimate the little fur babies to cats, dogs, adults, and children.

Make all the necessary household adjustments before introducing a new paw friend into the household. Just like their owners, pets crave personal space. For dogs, crates can be their havens, a place they can go to take a doggie nap, calm themselves during storms, or to simply get away for a few moments of peace

and quiet. Baby fences may work with small dogs or puppies. Cats will want to have escape locations in every room and like to have high places, like countertops or perches that are out of the dog's reach, or snug, feline-sized spots like a cabinet for their relaxation zones. Additionally, cats prefer having privacy for their litter box, so it is best to put this necessity in a place that is more challenging for the dog to access. For maximal peace in the household, it is best that each pet maintains exclusive use of its safe place. To ensure the health of your pets, carefully consider where to put the food and water dishes for each animal as well.

See that all the animals' vaccinations are current and be sure to get a vet check-up for the new animal prior to any introductions. If the dog is not obedience-trained, it is advised to start that task immediately, because it is especially important for him to master the "sit," "stay," and "leave it" commands before meeting the other pet. Also, take care to maintain playtimes or any other daily routines, since this helps to ease the transition for the resident pet.

When you're ready for the introductions, begin with the dog outside the home and the cat safely stowed in a secure place. Bring in the dog and allow Rex to roam the house for 30 to 45 minutes, and then either put the dog in its crate or have someone take it for a long walk. Next, release the cat and allow it to sniff around, introducing it to the dog's scent. If the dog is, or will be, crate-trained, encourage the cat to approach the dog in its crate. Rather than placing the cat next to the crate yourself, let the cat initiate this action on its own. As you are making these crucial introductions, remember to speak in a calm, soothing voice, calling both animals by name, as this will help to set the tone.

Expect that, even with the best of planning, a little fur may fly, at least figuratively speaking. It is completely normal for the cat to initially react to the dog by hissing and/or running off.

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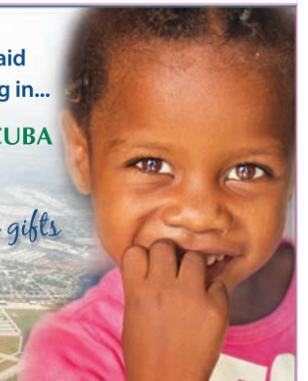
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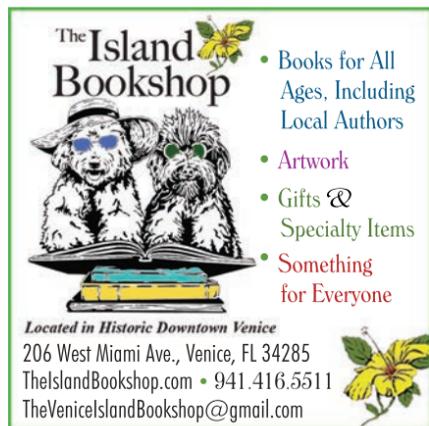
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PETS IN PARADISE

To establish the rules, the cat may also swat the dog on the nose. If this occurs, instead of disciplining Kitty, focus on Fido and give him a toy since shifting attention in this way tends to nip this type of behavior in the bud. Additionally, it's wise to anticipate that accidents or spraying in the house may happen as the animals adjust to one another. Just clean it up, using an enzymatic cleanser, without comment.

Consider attaching the dog's leash to your belt for the first few days, as any corrections that are necessary will be quicker and easier to make. Since the dog will have to follow you everywhere, this practice will establish you as the "alpha dog" and also give greater opportunity for the two of you to bond. Give a quick pull on the pup's leash and use the "sit" or "leave it" commands to curb any aggressive actions toward the cat. When Rover complies, respond immediately with praise or a treat. If, after about an hour, you feel that the dog is behaving well, let go of the leash, but be prepared to intervene, if need be.

Supervise all interactions and keep Fido on a leash until you are certain that Fluffy will be safe around the dog. As the pup and cat are getting used to each other, expect that your dog may try to pursue your cat. If so, placing the dog in its crate immediately is best. Before leaving a cat and dog alone together, make sure that the two animals are comfortable with one another. Clues of successful socialization are apparent when the dog is no longer interested in chasing the kitty, and when the cat feels safe investigating the pup.

Taking your time during the process of introducing your dog and cat to one another can pay huge dividends. Not only will this teach your pets how to peacefully coexist, but it may also be the start of a wonderful friendship that lasts for the rest of their lives!

The steps provided in this article are general in nature and may need to be adapted for your specific situation. It is advisable to contact your veterinarian, trainer or other dog care professional for suggestions tailored to suit your family's needs.

THE VENICE SYMPHONY Baroque, Brunch, and Bubbly Luncheon

The Venice Symphony kicked off its season with Baroque, Brunch, and Bubbly, on November 13 at Plantation Golf & Country Club in Venice. More than 160 guests enjoyed a buffet brunch, entertainment by a Venice Symphony string quartet, and a program highlighting The Venice Symphony's music education programs. Proceeds from the event, gift basket drawings, and a match by presenting sponsor Gulf Coast Community Foundation support music education in our community.



Symphony Violinist Liana Branscome serenades the crowd



Guests were welcomed by Cole Duncan, a graduate of The Venice Symphony Youth Orchestra, playing oboe

SNAPSHOTS

Photos Provided by The Venice Symphony



Brunch Committee members Donna Perkins, Joanne Corcoran, Chair Maureen Bentley, Denise Mattmuller, Dana Corn, and Barbara Freeman



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