**Introducing your New Dog to Other Animals**

Transitioning a new dog into a new home and environment takes time and patience to do it right, but there are ways to manage introductions that can help ease the process. Being proactive will be far more helpful and faster in the long run than being reactive. Here are some general ways to help and please note: your new dog may have more specific information and instructions that you should always follow.

**If you have Existing Pets,** it’s important that you maintain their normal daily routines as much as possible. Your new dog doesn’t yet have a set routine with you; everything is new. Create a predictable and controlled routine for your new dog in the first several days to help him acclimate. Keep your new dog separated from the pets he hasn’t met for at least a week, at which point you can reevaluate. The introductions to each animal may vary, depending on the species.

**Before you pick up your new dog**:

* Make sure your animals at home are ready for a new dog to come inside. You most likely won’t have time when you come home with your new dog to put your cats in their room, tuck your rabbits away and put your cockatoo back in her cage. Being proactive means thinking a few steps ahead to eliminate potential mistakes.
* Create a space for your new dog that will be a safe zone. This might be a crate with a comfy bed inside or a space surrounded by an X-Pen, dog gate or a room. Until you all know each other better, leave your new dog in this safe zone whenever you cannot watch all interactions.

**Dogs:** EvenIf you were able to do a pet meet prior to adoption and all the dogs did well, you’ll still need to be cautious because your dogs might feel differently about the new dog once you’re all *home*. Let the dogs get reacquainted outside in your fenced backyard first and let your new dog drag a leash. If you don’t have a fenced yard, take a walk around your neighborhood with the dogs. Of course, since you’re good about being proactive, you have already asked someone to help you walk the dogs together. Keep your new dog on leash, he doesn’t yet have a bond with you. If he trotted off, would he return to you or keep going?

Doorways can be physical trigger points for dogs, so bring your new dog in first and alone, still dragging his leash. Guide him throughout your house, let him sniff and explore and then show him where his safe zone/bed are. You can then bring the other dogs inside, but try to keep the energy level as calm as possible.

**Resources:** Feed your new dog separately and keep toys, long-lasting chews and anything of great dog value put away until you know that resource guarding isn’t a problem. A crate-trained dog always has a spot of great comfort to go to and a crate makes for a helpful tool for you during this integration period. See handout *Crate Training your Dog* to learn more [2.4.17\_Crate\_Training\_Your\_Dog.pdf (oregonhumane.org)](https://www.oregonhumane.org/wp-content/uploads/2.4.17_Crate_Training_Your_Dog.pdf)

**Cats:** Even if your new dogs’ history with cats is good, always proceed slowly and keep these recommendations in mind:

* Keep them separated for a week while your new dog gets used to their smell with something the cats slept on
* Make sure to start any introductions only after your dog is well exercised and calm
* The cats should have escape options, if needed: cat trees, a raised baby gate to slip under, a *Door Buddy* – prevents door from opening any wider than what the cat needs to pass through
* Introductions are done at a distance, with your dog always on a leash and bring tasty treats (cheese, chicken)
* Don’t allow your dog to stare/fixate or bark at the cats. Teach the cue *watch* (me) or the fun game *touch (put nose on your hand)* to redirect the attention onto you.
* With him sitting, let him look at the cats, use *watch* to get him to look back at you and reward with a treat. If he cannot remain calm, increase distance
* Eventually allow the cats to move around the room. Can your dog still look away from them or has the movement made this difficult? If movement makes it harder to look away, he needs more practice and time.

**Birds:** Depending on the type of bird, your dog might have more issues with the bird’s sounds (think Cockatoo or Macaw) than anything else. Work to slowly change his association with these sounds by using treats, toys and play. When he hears your bird, treats appear, a fun game begins or he gets to go on a walk. If you’ve always allowed your bird to be loose and your new dog is a field-trained Pointer, it may be too difficult to have them in the same area.

**Backyard Chickens:** Dogs can learn to be around chickens over time but it’s crucial to keep your dog leashed at the beginning and the chickens inside their safely enclosed area. Keep in mind the age of the dog and the breed type are factors that can make it harder for your new dog to ignore your chickens. Follow the guidelines for birds and cats. Reward all good behavior!

**Small Animals (Rabbits, Guinea Pigs, Ferrets, etc.):** Small animals can look identical to the plush toys you encourage him to play with or trigger prey drive. Introductions between your small friends and new dog may *not* be worth the potential risks involved.

**Encountering animals on walks:** Remember to apply all the above tips to dogs you encounter on walks, at parks, when introducing your dog to your friend’s dogs or when approaching a cat on the sidewalk, etc. Do not attempt introductions until you have bonded with your new dog and practiced some positive reinforcement training and even then, remember to go slow, increase distance (cross the street) and reward all calm behavior with treats, toys, pets and praise.

**Need help? Call our free pet behavior help line at (503) 416-2983.**