



# Introducing Your Adopted Pet

Thank you for choosing to adopt your new pet from the Central Missouri Humane Society! Introducing a pet to a new place and family can be stressful for them, so please be patient with your new companion. Even if the animal was playful and happy at the shelter, they may be wary in their new environment. Slowly introduce your new animal to its new environment - especially if you have current animals or children. **Animals can take time to get used to their new home and family, especially depending on their past history.**

**Avoid giving your new pet the run of the house** when you first bring them home - this can be overwhelming for them. Try starting them off in one or two rooms initially till they get more comfortable in your home.

- This is important for cats especially to reduce the risk of them finding a hiding place immediately and avoid your first home memory being a stressful “hide-and-seek” game. Give your new cat a week or two to settle in - It’s best to confine to a single, quiet room with the cat’s own litter box, food dish, and a box or bed. Use this time to make sure your new pet is healthy by making your appointment for the free physical exam provided to you with your adoption.
- You can try showing dogs around the house initially on-leash so you are with them while they are exploring and they know which rooms they can go into. Once they seem more relaxed, you can give them more access to the home.

**Do not leave your new pet home alone the second you adopt them.** Try to set aside some time to stay with them to allow them time to explore their new home as well as get to know you better. This will allow them to feel a little safer in their new environment.

**Do not let your new pet off leash in an unfenced area.** Your new companion is still adjusting to its new life - if they are scared or too eager to explore, they can run away and get lost. They may not recognize you as their owner yet so the chance of easily getting them back is slim.

**Slowly introduce your new pet to your current pets.** Introductions are important as this sets the tone for the future relationship between pets.

- **Dog to Dog**
  - **Have your dogs meet in a neutral setting**, preferably between some sort of barrier like a chain link fence to get a read on how they will interact with each other. If tails are wagging and there is no apparent aggression, have them meet face to face. Leave their leashes on but **drop the leashes** and allow them to drag - holding onto the leash can increase tension and increase the risk of an altercation.
  - **Let the new dog enter the house while the resident dog is kept outside.** Allow the new dog time to get a sense of their new home without upsetting your current dog.
  - **Keep the dogs SEPARATE to eat and when you are not home.** Dogs should not be fed together to avoid altercation until you get a better idea of their relationship.

- **Avoid toys and treats** at first to avoid conflict. Even if neither dog has never shown aggression over their toys or treats, it is still safe to wait to introduce resources till after you know how the dogs behave with each other.
- **Monitor** both dogs' cues. Reward polite behavior - never punish an animal for behavior. To learn more about dog behavior and how to mitigate/respond to unwanted behaviors, please email [behavior@cmhspets.org](mailto:behavior@cmhspets.org)
- **Dog to Cats**
  - If the cat is the newcomer to the household, allow them some time to get used to the space before introducing them to the dog (see more in our Cat to Cat section). If possible, give each of your pets an opportunity to swap spaces, and explore all of the new territory and scents before meeting face to face.
  - **The first face to face meetings between a cat and dog should be done with the dog on leash, or behind a barrier.** Do not force them to interact with each other, simply acknowledge each other's presence. Observe their reactions, ideally over several introductions. When the cat is confident enough to be out in the room, and the dog shows no interest in chasing the cat, you can take the dog off leash.
  - Make sure your cat has an **"escape route."** Your cat should have somewhere they can relax away from their new canine housemate, whether it is an elevated perch in a cat tree or a gated room of their own. **It is a good idea to have several supervised meetings before allowing them to be together unsupervised.**
- **Cat to Cat**
  - **Keep your new cat confined to one room** when you first bring them home, with their own litter box, bed and food. Make sure to give them safe and accessible places to hide out, both on and off the ground. Try to do this for about a week to give your new friend time to settle in and get used to you. Just keep in mind every cat is different, so they may need more time to feel comfortable in their new territory.
  - **Once comfortable, allow your new cat to explore while keeping your resident cat confined.** This allows your adopted cat to recognize your resident cat's scent. **Swap spaces** to allow both cats to get used to the other's scent and mix the scents.
  - **Feeding your cats or playing with your cats on opposite sides of a barrier**, such as a door, helps reinforce the new cat with a positive association.
  - **Give your cats time!** It can take a while for your resident cat to see your new cat as a permanent addition, and for your new cat to feel safe and accepted in their new territory. Don't get discouraged if they're not friends right off the bat!
  - **If they get into a fight**, take your new cat back to its "sanctuary" room to allow both cats to decompress. Do not introduce new cats while in your arms to avoid getting scratched.

**Children should not be left alone with your new pet and need to be careful with their new companion.** Animals must be treated gently and handled with care. Young children must never be left alone or unsupervised with any new animal, even for a moment. Although children can participate in light-care activities like grooming and playtime, a parent must be fully prepared to be the primary caretaker and monitor the interactions between their child and your new pet.

**We always take back our animals if your new adopted pet is not a right fit for your new home, but we do ask to be patient with your new pet!**