



# DOGS AND CATS

When working on Dog and Cat relationships inside a home, it's wise to make sure the dog's manners are well established. A few basics such as the use of a clicker, "Leave it" or "stay" can be helpful. Baby gates are another tool for helping keep the peace when a dog and cat learn to live under the same roof.

The best way to teach a dog and cat to accept each other is to prevent the unwanted behavior. The more they are allowed to practice harassing each other, the more likely it is for this behavior to become a habit. Chasing cats is a self-rewarding behavior, which means that the act itself makes the dog happy instead of other behaviors such as sit, where the treat after the behavior is the reward.

It's also important to understand that reprimanding a dog once it has initiated the chase, does very little to prevent them from doing it again. The thrill of the chase outweighs the reprimand! Our goal is not to find a more effective reprimand, but to manage the situation so that the animals make choices we prefer, which we then reward. Behaviors that are rewarded are more likely to be repeated so ensure that you reward the correct behaviors quickly and enthusiastically.

Give your cat a safe area that your dog cannot reach, a "Cat Zone" which is off limits to your dog. Cats enjoy being higher up, so a cat tree would be ideal in this space. Lay down a few blankets or towels in places that your cat likes to lay so that it will gain your cat's scent. Once it really smells like cat, you can lay the blanket in your dog's bed and feed them treats, or an overstuffed Kong toy so your dog begins to associate the cat smell with a happy reward.

Be on the lookout for moments when your dog calmly acknowledges the presence of the cat. For example, if your dog is laying at your feet and suddenly hears the cat meow from the other room, instantly use your clicker and give your dog a treat. You can even feed multiple treats to keep your dog with you and redirect their attention away from the cat. With this, you teach your dog two things. 1) The presence of the cat means good things: Treats! 2) Paying more attention to you, even when the cat is nearby, has an even higher payout of treats!

## Structured Introductions

Introductions should be done at a distance and focused on creating positive associations with each other. Keep your dog on a leash inside your home and make sure you have an easily accessible jar of treats nearby (don't leave them in the bag which is difficult to get into quickly).

- Make sure the cat is in a place where it feels safe and allow the dog to approach.
- They don't need to go nose to nose the first time, but as the dog approaches, make sure you are giving them a steady stream of treats.

If the cat panics and tries to run, don't force it to stay. Instead, get the dog's attention with a handful of treats and move away before giving the sit command. Give the animals an hour and try again.

If things go well, continue feeding the dog while both animals are in the same room for a few minutes then leave the room with the dog. When the dog can no longer see the cat, stop the treats. Repeat this process several times, making sure to give both animals time in between sessions to become comfortable before starting again.

These treats serve as more than as a simple distraction. By only providing the free flowing treats when your dog sees the cat, you are training the dog to associate the cat with the treats. This helps change the dog's initial excited response to the sight of the cat to a happy anticipation of treats instead. Your dog will begin to view the cat less as prey and more as a source of pay (treats).

## Relaxed Interactions

As your dog begins to offer attention to you when the cat is around (in anticipation of treats), you can begin to ease into regular relaxed routines with both animals in the same room. At these times, allow your dog to drag a leash around, hooked to their collar. In case they begin trying to chase after the cat, you can grab or step on the leash and prevent that from happening. If you are afraid you won't catch the leash in time, consider tethering the dog's leash to a leg of the couch or coffee table (if it's heavy enough). Make sure to provide your dog with something to entertain them such as a stuffed kong, deer antler, or other appropriate chew.

## Teaching your Dog "Leave it"

Leave it is a skill which can save your dog's life and is extremely important in our training routine. This command tells your dog to leave something alone before they put it in their mouth. This command is incredibly helpful with dogs who like to chase squirrels, eat cat poop, play chase with unsuspecting toddlers, or even stop your dog from eating medication you may have accidentally dropped. Since your dog will not be looking at you when you give this command, there is no hand signal. We learn this command with two games to help your dog best understand what it means.

### Game #1

- Stand or sit on a chair
- Show your dog a treat and let them get a good sniff of it
- Place the treat under your foot (Be sure to wear shoes!)

- As your dog is sniffing at your shoe and trying to get the treat, say the words “Leave it” in a firm tone (space out the commands to every 10 seconds so the dog has a chance to respond)
- **As soon as your dog looks away** from the treat and looks at you, use your clicker and give your dog a treat (not the one under your shoe)

This helps your dog understand what reaction you are looking for. Once you have given the command to “Leave it”, **it is very important that you never let your dog get the treat under your foot.** Once you’ve repeated this game and your dog understands to look at you when they hear “Leave it” then it’s time for the second game.

### Game #2

- Stand on the handle of your dog’s leash, giving them the full length of it to move around
- Let your dog see a treat in your hand then toss a treat out onto the floor (Make sure it is outside your dog’s reach)
- Only after **making sure that your dog cannot reach the treat**, use the command “Leave it”
- When your dog turns their head to look at you or pulls away from the treat on the floor, make sure to use your clicker and reward them with a treat

A note about Leave it:

- **Once you have told your dog to “Leave it”, they are not allowed to have it.** This is a lifesaving skill and leave it means **FOREVER**, not just for a little while. When you are done playing the games, make sure you pick up the treats you practiced with and put them back into your pouch for later use.

After a week of practice with just treats, we will begin to branch out the command to include other items. During this time, **make sure you only use the “Leave it” command when you have full control of your dog.** Dogs don’t generalize well, which means that you have to teach them “Leave it” means more than just treats, but also other things.

- Start inside the house with socks, shoes, kid’s toys, etc. Keep your dog on the leash and use your leave it command with these items
- Graduate to things outdoors like squirrels, other dogs, running children, etc. **Make sure you are constantly giving your dog treats for leaving these new things alone**

Ultimate test: A burger!! (Do not attempt the ultimate test unless you have done amazingly well with the lower level items. I do not suggest giving pets food meant for human consumption)

## Toys

Toys can be a dog owner’s best friend, they help you create a bond with your dog and give them something to play with when you are busy. Your pet’s play style will change what toys you should give them.

- **Gentle players:** Soft squeaky toys are wonderful fun and there are plenty of options, cow hooves are an excellent option for small breed puppies
- **Rough players:** Toys made from firehose are durable, along with rope toys and deer antlers
- **Destructive players:** Check out the Jolly Ball, a toy made for horses which is extremely durable, as well as Kong toys

- **All Dogs:** Toys that stimulate your dog's mind are an excellent way of taking their attention off of the cat. When a dog's mind is stimulated, it reduces boredom and helps exhaust them mentally, to match the physical exhaustion of regular play. Search "Dog puzzles" on amazon and you can find some really fun things!

## Trainer Suggested Services

- o Doggy Day Care – Check with your local vet's office or Unleashed. Doggy Day Care provides your dog a chance to socialize with other dogs and get excess amounts of energy out of their system. Imagine bringing your dog home after day care and they are exhausted, lazy and happy! I cannot recommend this service enough!