

Top Tips for training with cats



Your greyhound has been assessed as being cat trainable, however they are not cat trained! It will be up to you to train your new dog to live harmoniously with your existing cat or cats. Remember, your cat was there first so for some cats it is a terrifying experience having a large dog arrive in their home. Take it slowly!

Usually our owners find the training straightforward but do follow these tips to get your hound's cat training off to a great, and safe, start. You must remain calm, never yell or panic. It is also best to keep children out of the way during first introductions.

We find the easiest and safest way to introduce your new dog to the cat is by using a crate. If you are following the settling in advice in the GAP Crate Training Guide you will find cat training much easier. Your dog and cat will get used to each other without very much interference from you. If you would like to do more active cat training you can follow the guidelines below. It is important to go at your cat's pace. If your cat is showing signs of stress or not wanting to be anywhere near the dog DO NOT force it. You will have to wait until your cat is settled and happy to participate in cat training.

Always err on the side of caution. Make sure the dog's muzzle is on and properly fitted until you are confident they have accepted each other and are safe together.

1. Keep your cat inside and know where the cat is when arriving home from the kennel. Walk your dog into the house on a lead and ensure the greyhound is always leashed unless your cat is securely tucked away. If the dog is off leash and sees the cat, and the cat sees the dog and runs, the hound will likely give chase. Your greyhound does not yet know the cat is part of the family and allowing this to happen **makes training much harder**.
2. Take the dog to the garden for toileting but do not let your new dog off leash if your cat is not safely locked inside. If you have followed Step 1, and have the cat inside, your dog may be more at ease to toilet off lead. When the dog urinates reward them with a treat and praise. Let your hound know they have done the right thing in the right place.
3. *Work on focus on you – so your hound knows how to focus on you for a treat. See our website for how to work on this.*
4. **First Introduction. Try not to do this on the hound's first day in your home if possible.** Do this in a single largish room with high places for the cat to retreat to, and all the doors shut. This is to stop the cat running away and allows some space between the animals. Make sure you are armed with really good treats – cooked chicken is great.

Have the cat in the room first. Never carry the cat when the dog can see the cat during this training period, it will just make the cat more interesting for the hound. When the hound sees the cat, ask the dog to turn their attention to you. Use a happy voice, call their name and as soon as the hound glances in your direction be ready with a treat. Repeat. It is important to give the dog a chance to look at the cat, and make the association that they are being rewarded for looking at you and ignoring the cat.

If you cannot get your hound to turn their attention to you, make it a little bit easier and move the hound and cat a bit further away from each other, then gradually build up to a closer distance.

5. A crate is a great training tool during this introduction period with both cats and small children. The crate gives you and the hound peace of mind, with them in their safe place and you knowing exactly where they are.

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Use the time that the greyhound is in the crate to have the cat in the same room. The hound is usually quiet at this time and this will help the cat gain some confidence with the hound being there. It can be a relaxing time for all to get used to each other's company and allow their relationships to develop in a safe way. Again have treats handy and reward good behavior by gently tossing a treat into the crate for the hound, and cat treats to your cat, to reinforce positive associations with each other's presence. Never restrain or force your cat to move closer or interact with the dog.

6. Time spent managing introductions in the first few weeks will pay off in the long run. Twice daily training for 5 minutes will allow you to gauge the dog's progress. Always have treats handy. These should be a favorite and only used for this specific cat training. If the greyhound is 'focused' on the cat, but voluntarily breaks eye contact, this is major reward territory. If you can break the attention by the use of a word (like "leave"), it's treat time. Time, patience and consistency will get results.
7. A really good way to move your training forward is to follow the steps below – but go at a speed you are comfortable with, you are much better to go too slow than too fast!
 - Dog on lead and muzzled with the cat – work on allowing the dog to calmly look at the cat and then focus on you for a treat, once this is going really well move on to:
 - Dog on lead and muzzle off – working on the same focus on you, when this is going well and you can move around with your greyhound on lead and happily ignoring the cat move on to:
 - Dog off lead and muzzle on – once you are at this stage your greyhound should be happy to lay down and relax and offer focus on you when asked for it.
8. Make sure your greyhound **never has the opportunity to chase your cat** outside as this will undo all your good work. This means keeping doors closed and knowing where your dog and cats are at all times for the first few weeks. If you don't know where the cat is, don't let the dog off lead, inside or out.
9. Exercise and training! Generally, by providing two walks a day (length dependent on your greyhound's stamina) will mean your greyhound will be less likely to look for entertainment elsewhere. Some extra training (check out our website) will also entertain and tire your greyhound.
10. Accept that your cat may well be upset about sharing their home initially. In time nearly all cats learn to accept this long legged stranger, many make friends with their new housemate and some are even caught curled up together through the cold winter nights.
11. Use baby gates. Have a designated "safe room" for the cat to go to while adjusting to their new four-legged friend. The baby gate allows the cat to watch the greyhound from safety but also be able to freely get in and out as required. Our recommendation is to have the gate 10-15cm above the floor level so that the cat can go either over or under if needed.
12. Once both cat and dog are doing a good job of being inside together, move your training outside. Use the same routine as outlined above in Step 7. Do not assume they will be great together outside just because they are been good inside...start again and take it slowly.

Most importantly, a major factor in the success of greyhounds and cats living in harmony is the human element. Animals pick up on human uncertainty, anxiety or stress. So as hard as it may be, the calmer you stay during introductions, the better the chance of your greyhound and cat will settle-in safely together.