



THE DOGGY DIGEST

TRAINING TIPS BROUGHT TO YOU BY MUTTS WITH MANNERS

Dogs and Cats: From Chaos to Calm
By Trelle Dandridge - Mutts with Manners

So, you adopted an adult dog and have a cat? First of all, thank you for adopting an older dog, and hopefully by implementing this training and behavior modification plan your household will go from chaos to calm! Remember, success will depend on consistency, management, and gradual desensitization. Note: This plan is for cats who are used to living with dogs already.

Training Plan: Dog + Cat Household Harmony

1. Management & Safety First

- **Separate at first:** Use baby gates, crates, or leashes to manage interactions until the dog has strong foundation skills.
- **Safe zones for the cat:** Ensure the cat has high perches, shelves, or rooms the dog cannot access (baby gates in doorways that have an opening for a cat to pass through are the best).
- **Leashed intros:** Begin with the dog on a leash whenever the cat is free to roam.

2. Foundation Behaviors

A. Name Recognition

- **Goal:** Dog orients to handler immediately when hearing their name.
- **Steps:**
 1. Say the dog's name in a cheerful tone.
 2. Mark (clicker or "Yes!") the instant they look at you.
 3. Reward with a high-value treat.
 4. Repeat in different rooms, gradually adding mild distractions.

B. Focus / "Look at Me"

- **Goal:** Dog maintains eye contact (or face contact in the beginning) on cue.
- **Steps:**
 1. Hold a treat near your face.
 2. When the dog makes eye contact, face contact, or even just looking at the treat in the beginning, mark and treat.
 3. Add the cue "Look" or "Focus."
 4. Increase duration and distractions slowly, practicing near the cat at later stages.

C. Leave It

- **Goal:** Dog disengages from objects/animals on cue.



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• Steps:

1. Hold a treat in your closed fist. Say "Leave it."
2. Dog sniffs/paws? Wait it out. When they look away, mark and reward from the other hand.
3. Practice with items on the floor, then toys, then low-value food.
4. Eventually apply the cue when the dog notices the cat, rewarding disengagement.

D. Recall / Come

• Goal: Dog runs enthusiastically to handler when called.

• Steps:

1. Use a happy tone: "Come!" + clap or kneel down.
2. Reward generously (jackpot treats, praise, play).
3. Start in low-distraction areas, then practice on a long line outside.
4. Once solid, practice indoors when the cat is present but at a safe distance.

3. Cat Desensitization Protocol

Stage 1: Observation at a Distance

- o Dog on leash, cat free to move.
- o Reward calm behavior and focus on you when the cat is present.
- o End sessions before the dog gets overstimulated.

Stage 2: Controlled Movement

- o Cat moves across the room; handler cues "Look" or "Leave it."
- o Reward heavily for disengagement or calm watching.

Stage 3: Closer Proximity

- o Gradually reduce distance, always keeping the dog below threshold (not lunging, barking, or fixating).
- o Reinforce calm sits, downs, and focus near the cat.

Stage 4: Off-Leash with Supervision

- o Only when reliable with "Leave it," "Come," and "Focus."
- o Short, supervised periods with plenty of reinforcement for calmness.

Stage 5: Real-Life Integration

- o Allow coexistence during everyday activities with supervision, still separating them if you have to be away from the home.
- o Continue rewarding calm, polite behavior around the cat.



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5. Extra Tips

- **High-value rewards:** Use special treats only for cat training (cheese, chicken, etc.).
- **Short sessions:** 5-10 minutes several times a day prevent frustration and stress to dog AND cat.
- **Consistency:** Everyone in the household should use the same cues and rules.
- **Monitor the cat:** Stress signals (tail flicks, ears back, hiding) mean the session should pause or reset.

Success looks like: Dog reliably responding to cues, disengaging from the cat when asked, and calmly coexisting without chasing or fixating.

This plan is adjustable depending on the individual animals, but remember to take it slow and always monitor the dog AND the cats stress. Consider muzzle training if you are too nervous, and always hire a professional trainer to help work through some of these exercises.