

TRAINING YOUR GREYHOUND TO LIVE WITH YOUR CAT

Greyhounds have been valued historically for their hunting prowess and selected for their ability to independently sight, chase, outmanoeuvre, and catch fast moving prey such as deer, foxes, rabbits, and hares.

They are genetically predisposed to be good at and enjoy chasing and catching small, fast moving objects. Much the same as it feels good for collies to herd, terriers to bite, retrievers to fetch, beagles to follow a scent, or huskies to pull. It is important to recognise that an element of predatory behaviour is to be expected and to appreciate the very specific skill set that this breed inherently has.

The best time for dogs to be introduced to different species is during the socialisation period, a critical window of development that occurs under 4 months of age. This window is closed when you adopt a retired racing hound and it is vital to understand that this fact along with their breed type can pose additional challenges when integrating them to a house with cats.

We assess a very small number of greyhounds as being able to live with cats, however they are not trained yet! It will be up to you to train your new dog to co-exist safely with your cat and this will take time, patience, and consistency

Two key things to keep in mind are:

1. **Go slowly** – Let the cat set the pace, it is important that they are not showing signs of stress or fear for you to progress with training. Equally, your hound's stress hormones will be higher over the first week in a new home and this will influence their behaviour.
2. **Be present** - While they are developing a relationship, treat interactions as “training sessions” where the cat and hound are supervised and have your full attention. Otherwise the hound is crated, behind a baby gate, or the cat is in a separate part of the house, so they don't have access to each other. This ensures that the greyhound never has the opportunity to chase your cat (or visiting neighbourhood cats) as this will undo all of your good work and poses serious safety risks for the cat.

Ways to help your cat feel safe:

- A designated “safe room” for the cat to go to while adjusting to the new arrival. Prepare this before you come home with your hound, so you know where your cat is.
- Place the cat food and water somewhere out of reach of the hound so they can eat in peace.
- If your cat has a litter tray make sure this is also out of reach of the hound, if your cat usually toilets outdoors it could be worth putting a litter tray in the safe spot if they're feeling too vulnerable to leave the house for now.
- Ensure your cat has plenty of places high up that they can retreat to.
- You can search online for DIY enrichment ideas to reduce cat stress.
- Don't pick up your cat or force them to interact.

Signs the cat is stressed:

- Hissing, growling
- Swatting
- Running
- Hiding or avoiding
- Freezing
- Tail fluffed up
- Weight loss
- Toileting problems
- Other illness

Before they meet:

Scent can be just as important for a cat as it is for a dog so these introductions can begin long before either of them meet by swapping bedding from both animals.

Introductions:

Outside of training sessions it is crucial that you keep your greyhound and cat separated and know both animal's whereabouts. Failing to do this poses serious safety risks for your cat and could result in a fatal injury. We strongly recommend your greyhound wears a muzzle as a precaution.

Time and patience spent carefully managing introductions in the first several weeks will pay off in the long run. Move on to the next step only when both the cat and greyhound are disinterested. Bear in mind that often the hound will learn to live with the cat indoors but will still chase if the cat is outside or if they run.

1. After trading smells, feed the cat and hound behind a closed door where they can't see each other, but can hear and smell each other.
2. Next, meet through a door where they can see each other, this could be from behind a baby gate or a ranch slider door. Continue to reward with food calm behaviours or being disinterested in the cat e.g. turning their head away after looking.
3. Have the cat and dog in the same room, but the hound is on lead, continue reward calm behaviour and disengaging from the cat to look at you instead.
4. Progress to supervised muzzled off lead interactions (or you could have the lead loose and trailing behind the dog) in one room, while ensuring the cat has an exit or a high vantage point to retreat to.
5. Avoid unsupervised interactions until your cat and dog have been peacefully coexisting in supervised situations without any incidents for 3 months.

Warning signs of predation indicating that the situation is unsafe for your cat, you need to stop, and contact GAP:

- Intense, fixed staring unable to take their eyes off the cat
- Licking lips, salivating, teeth chattering
- Neck arched, stiff tall stance, tail up, standing over the cat
- Stalking
- High pitched whining/squeaking while looking at the cat
- Pawing at the cat or bunting with their nose
- Barking if restricted from reaching the cat