



## KIDS AND CATS

Your child will be so excited to meet the latest pet addition to your family, but a few words of caution should help you make the introduction as safe and loving as possible. Your child wants to run straight up to your pet and live happily ever after, but you might choose to make a slower introduction to ensure safety and responsible behavior on all counts. Your good parenting will insure a lifelong happy relationship between your children and your new kitty.

Introducing your child to a new pet is a big deal for both your child and your pet. Both are meeting what you hope to be two parts of a great and lasting friendship. So you would be advised to supervise this introduction.

You might choose to supervise the first several introductions of child and pet. By being in the room, you can be there if there are any questions or unexpected challenges. Your pet needs to know how to be gentle with your child, and your child needs to learn how to be gentle with your pet. A very young child might have trouble understanding this, and you should be there to ensure this happens. Likewise, your pet needs to know there are certain boundaries with your child. A pet with claws or long toenails can scratch up your child, and you should be there to see that this doesn't happen.

By being there in the initial introduction, you can see where certain needs might need to be met. For instance, maybe you will find that your new cat needs its nails trimmed. Or maybe your child needs to be taught how to safely play with a pet. The best way to learn what your pet's and child's needs are is to be there to witness their meeting.

Fear on the part of your child or pet, or simply initial discomfort, can cause a little initial friction. You should be there to know that this needs to be worked on. How do you work on it? Ask your vet or call an animal trainer to get good tips on how to handle different situations.

The bottom line is that by being there for the introduction, you will learn what may or may not need to be done. If there are initial challenges, do not be immediately discouraged. Look at this simply as an opportunity to learn and to grow with your new pet and your child.

Of course, there are situations that simply don't work out. If your child or your pet is in risk of danger, then you need to think again about bringing the pet into your family. But more likely than not, you will simply need to establish healthy rules and boundaries between pet and child to ensure an ongoing, healthy, and safe relationship between all parties concerned.