



GREYHOUND

Living with Cats and Small Animals



Greyhound
Trust 





Greyhounds and cats

Some greyhounds have a high prey drive and may want to chase cats and other small animals. Due to a greyhound's speed, they are capable of actually catching them. During their upbringing, most greyhounds will have been trained to chase a fast moving furry lure, which means their instinct to chase a cat may still be present. With careful positive training, many greyhounds can live quite happily with cats and other small domestic pets.

When choosing your greyhound, Greyhound Trust volunteers will have been made aware that you have other pets at home and will have endeavoured to provide you with a greyhound which has been assessed as being 'cat trainable' i.e. shown little/no interest in a cat or small dog when meeting them at a kennel. However, it is not a guarantee that when a fast moving small animal appears in front of a newly homed greyhound, that it will not revert to its instinct to chase.

Positive training

Positive training works by rewarding our greyhounds for the behaviours we want and ignoring or preventing the behaviours we don't want. By rewarding our greyhounds as soon as they perform the desired behaviour, such as 'leave it', we are letting them know they have performed the correct action and giving them a reason to repeat the behaviour next time we ask for it.

Greyhounds are a sensitive breed and do not respond well to punishment, using adverse training techniques such as shouting, physical punishment or using rattle cans will not teach your greyhound what to do. It is more likely to make your greyhound fearful and cause other problems. For further information on positive training, please read the '**Basic Commands and Training**' leaflet.



Training Tip:

The more difficult a behaviour is to train, the more you will need to use higher value rewards, such as dried liver, cooked chicken and bits of sausage. Dried biscuit type treats or pieces of vegetables are unlikely to be motivating enough.





Using rewards in training

When you start teaching your greyhound to do something, you need to reward them as soon as they have performed the required action. The type of rewards you use need to be something that your greyhound really wants and values.

Most greyhounds respond well to food rewards such as small pieces of cheese, hot-dogs, sausage and chicken. You will find that your greyhound will favour certain food types over others – these treats are the ‘high value’ treats that you will need to use in cat training and when you’re asking your greyhound to perform a behaviour they find difficult.





Introducing a greyhound to a home with a cat or other small animals in residence

In order to introduce a greyhound to live with a cat successfully, you will need to consider both the safety of your greyhound and cat. This will help ensure that your training is successful and as stress free as possible for all involved.

Before bringing your greyhound home, the first step is to provide your cat with a safe area that the greyhound has no access to. This may mean using a stair gate (that is high enough that the greyhound cannot easily jump over it) to separate them or providing a separate room for your cat. In this safe area you will need to provide your cat with a litter tray, their bed, food and water.

Exchanging bedding between your greyhound and cat is a good way of getting your greyhound and cat used to each other's scent prior to homing.

You will also need to make sure that your cat has plenty of high areas to escape to, as these provide your cat with extra safe space away from the greyhound. You may also wish to restrict your cats access to going outside in this introductory period to prevent your cat from leaving home and not returning.

It is also advisable to muzzle and keep your greyhound on a lead for the first training session with your cat. Most greyhounds are used to wearing a plastic box muzzle and it provides protection for both your greyhound and the cat.

You will need to keep the greyhound and cat separate for a number of days or even weeks, before you can introduce them fully to each other. First meetings need to be calm to give both your cat and greyhound a chance to get used to each other's scent before they meet, and training begins.

Before you start your training

You will need:

- A flat, comfortable lead (leather or soft webbing)
- A suitable and secure collar (for example a leather greyhound collar, fish tail shape or similar)
- A muzzle (the plastic box type for greyhounds)
- small, high value treats (the size of a large pea)
- A quiet area, without any distractions to train in





Leave it!

1. For successful cat training, a strong and reliable 'leave it' command is essential as it forms the basis of training your greyhound to live with cats. In practise, it means ignoring the object, leave it alone and pay attention to me. By training a reliable 'leave it', your greyhound will soon learn that ignoring an object leads to good things happening, whereas if he pays attention to the object the good things stop. Only once your greyhound has a good understanding of 'leave it' your greyhound is likely to try to get the food by licking, nibbling or pawing at your hand. Ignore this and keep your hand still.
2. The moment your greyhound takes his nose away from your hand, even if only for a millisecond, feed them a reward from your other hand.
3. Practice and repeat until your greyhound automatically takes his head away and doesn't look at the food in your hand.
4. Once you are sure your greyhound knows the 'leave it' command, you can start applying it to other objects you want your greyhound to ignore, remembering to praise your greyhound and reward them every time they leave a new object.



If your cat is more restricted than normal, make sure they have access to food, water and toys.

Training Tip:

Remember to only say 'leave it' once each time you practise and wait for your greyhound to move their head away before rewarding.





Managing introductions

First impressions count and if carefully managed, there is no reason why your cat and greyhound can't get along and become best friends.

If you have trained a reliable 'leave it' and followed the safety steps, it is time to introduce your greyhound and cat to each other. Introductions should be taken slowly and with sufficient distance between your greyhound and cat to ensure that both remain calm.

Your greyhound will need to be on their lead and muzzled, so that they cannot chase the cat. You will also need to make sure that the cat has an 'escape route', such as a baby gate on the door or some high areas that allow the cat to get away but still remain in sight of the greyhound; some cats may feel more secure and relaxed in a cat basket. Follow the steps outlined in training 'leave it'; however, rather than having food in between your finger and thumb, use the 'leave it' command as soon as your greyhound looks at the cat. The moment your greyhound looks away from the cat and pays attention to you, praise them and reward with a food treat.

Ensure that you keep enough distance between your cat and greyhound in the early stages of training to prevent any lunging.

Once your greyhound is calmly ignoring the cat at a close distance, you can remove the lead and muzzle and continue the training. Remember to supervise all interactions and continue to reward both your greyhound and cat for calm behaviour.

Training Tip:

Don't be tempted to rush the introduction stage and remember to always reward both your cat and greyhound for calm, relaxed behaviour when they are together.



Training in different areas

Once your greyhound is reliably ignoring the cat within your home, it is time to train them to ignore the cat in the garden and other environments. Although your greyhound may understand to ignore the cat inside, this does not necessarily transfer to meetings outdoors.

As this is a different environment you will need to go back to managing the introductions with your greyhound being muzzled and on a lead and following the advice on training 'leave it'.



Helpful Tip:

Do not allow your greyhound to chase a cat at any time - managing your greyhounds chase instinct is very important. Once a greyhound has learned how rewarding it is to chase a cat, it will make successful cat training much harder.



If you have a confident greyhound and a fearful cat

Do not allow your greyhound to chase the cat under any circumstances, as this will only increase your cats fear of the greyhound. Ensure introductions are carefully managed by placing your cat in secure cat crate/cat carrier and allowing the cat to see the greyhound in the room. Your greyhound will need to be on his lead and kept a good distance away.

Ensure your greyhound is reliably responding to 'leave it' and reward both the greyhound and cat for calm behaviour. Over time (this could be days or weeks) gradually decrease the distance between the greyhound and cat, ensuring both remain calm. When your cat is more relaxed around the greyhound, you can remove the cat crate and continue the training, with the cat being free to move around. Remember to ensure that you provide an 'escape' for the cat if they become afraid.



If you have a fearful greyhound and confident cat

Do not allow the cat to be alone with your greyhound unsupervised or to take a swipe at your greyhound. This will only increase your greyhound's fear of the cat and may lead to your greyhound reacting to your cat in an unfavourable manner.

You will need to manage introductions carefully by muzzling and keeping your greyhound on a lead when you introduce them to the cat. Follow the guidance in the confident greyhound – **Fearful cat section**.

When the greyhound is comfortable with the cat being in the same room and in the cat carrier, you can continue training the 'leave it' with the cat out of the crate.

At no point leave your cat and greyhound unattended. If you are at all unsure whether your greyhound and cat are safe together, contact an experienced, registered behaviourist for advice.

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