

Dogs, Cats, Birds, and Bunnies – Even a Lot of Them Can Get Along

In my house, there are 6 cats, 2 very energetic dogs, and 3 parrots. And eventually there are probably going to be some other species. Some people might be surprised that everyone gets along.

But, as is the case with people, everyone in your pet family needs to understand boundaries and pecking order. Here are suggestions about how you can have a peaceful animal kingdom in your home.

1. **Start slowly.** No one likes a big shock and to have all the rules change at once. Introduce new pets to your other pets slowly—first with supervision and for short periods. Let everyone get comfortable and get to know one another. Then, gradually increase the time and freedom as your pets seem to settle in and like each other.
2. **Establish the pack's hierarchy.** People are the leaders, older pets are next, and new puppies, kittens, rabbits, ferrets, and anything else come last. That means you might see older pets push ahead of younger ones when they eat or want a toy. That's natural and you shouldn't



3. **Avoid disagreement.** Make sure everyone has their own food, toys, cages, and litter boxes—sharing might come later.
4. **Be patient.** It can take time, even with the sweetest of pets. I've had the most easy-going cats turn into very angry little tyrants as soon as a new kitten or puppy joined the household. Don't rush it and don't force it.
5. **Show some love.** Let your older pets know they're loved! It's easy to shower the new baby with all the attention, but you need to let your constant companions see that they still hold the same special place in your heart.