

INTRODUCING YOUR NEW DOG TO FAMILY DOGS

So, you have decided to add another dog to your family! You may have made the decision to adopt another dog to give your current dog a companion, to rescue the new dog or because you just wanted another dog. Before you adopt another dog, consider the breed, sex and personality of the dog(s) you already have. Has your resident dog been socialized to other dogs as a puppy and either lived with or regularly been around other dogs as an adult? Is he generally friendly and relaxed with other dogs? Does he meet new experiences well or does he become fearful or aggressive? What do you know about the personality and experiences of the dog you are going to adopt? Is he friendly and tolerant with other dogs?

Whether you adopt a puppy or an adult dog, the same steps should be followed to introduce your new dog to your resident dog. However because puppies are more easily injured than adult dogs you must be extra careful to ensure your puppy's safety. Puppies are also quite impressionable and if your adult dog is aggressive or threatening, this can greatly influence your puppy's behavior toward other dogs.

How To Introduce Your Dogs To Each Other

It is very important to make the introduction a positive experience for both dogs.

First impressions are important and if the dogs have a bad experience with each other, it may either take them longer to get along or permanently damage their relationship. If possible, allow the dogs to first meet outside your home such as in a room at the shelter, or in a park before bringing the new dog home.

During the introduction period, until the dogs are reliably getting along, they should be supervised at all times and housed separately when they are not being supervised. Alternate which dog is allowed the run of the house or yard when alone and which is confined in a part of it, such as an extra bedroom.

At first, you may not want to allow the dogs to have free access to each other when you are supervising them. Separate them with a baby gate or put one or both dogs in their own crate so they can see each other. If you only use one crate, you can rotate who is in the crate at each session. As they watch or interact with each other through the barrier, talk to them quietly, give both treats and encourage calm, relaxed behavior. Don't allow the dogs to become overly excited or aroused. You can also take the dogs for a walk on leash, keeping a distance between them.

Watch each dog's behavior carefully. Look for any tenseness, fearfulness, or threatening or aggressive behavior. If you observe any, continue to keep the dogs separated and do not allow them together until you see only calm, relaxed behaviors while they are on either side of the barrier. You may need to keep them apart this way for only several hours, or possibly

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Ask your pet professional for more information about dog behavior.

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several days. If you aren't sure how to recognize fearful, threatening or aggressive behavior in your dogs, see the Pamphlet for Pet Parents on canine body language.

Once the dogs are comfortable in each others presence, allow them to come together with both on leashes. It is very important that you either keep the leashes loose or just allow the dogs to drag them. If you are tugging on the leashes to keep the dogs away from one another this can cause fear which may trigger aggressive behavior.

If either dog becomes uneasy or unmanageable, calmly end the session and next time have them together for a shorter time period or keep more distance between them. Keep a squirt bottle with water, or a can full of coins at hand to interrupt overly exuberant or aggressive behavior. A citronella spray called Spray Shield™ can be used if necessary should the dogs fight. If this happens, you should separate the dogs and contact an experienced certified applied or veterinary behaviorist or other behavior consultant. Talk to your pet professional about help or a referral. You can find out more about trainers and behavior consultants in the Pamphlet for Pet Parents of the same name.

Dogs vary as to how quickly they move through the introduction phase. Some dogs may be immediate buddies, while others may take days, weeks, or months to accept each other. As they become more familiar with one another, their behaviors may continue to change. Some dogs get along well at first but develop problems later on, or vice versa. In rare cases, the dogs may never get along and finding one of the dogs another home may be the best thing to do. Consult a behavior consultant to help you evaluate your situation.

If you have more than one resident dog to introduce to your new dog, introduce each dog separately to the new dog and gradually work up to having all the dogs together.

Managing Multiple Dogs

Work to get good verbal control over your dogs. The better the control, the easier the introduction will be and life in general will be less stressful for you and your dogs. Teach each dog to sit, lie down, stay and come reliably under many different circumstances. Read the Pamphlet for Pet Parents on teaching your dog to sit, down and stay. You may need the help of a trainer to get your dogs under control. Provide individualized attention for each dog with out the other dogs present so the dogs aren't always competing with one another for special time with you. Be patient and consistent with your dogs and know that the time you spend introducing them in the beginning will improve their chances of developing a friendly relationship and make fighting less likely. Spaying or neutering your dogs will help reduce the chances for some potential behavioral problems and may make the introduction smoother.

What Not To Do

Do not leave unfamiliar dogs alone and unsupervised. Once the dogs are comfortable with each other while you are supervising them you can gradually work up to longer times that you leave them alone together. You can do this by briefly standing outside the door, getting the mail or running

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an errand. Avoid using pinch or choke collars, especially during the introduction, as the discomfort from these collars can elicit fear and aggressive behavior.

Don't physically punish the dogs if they show fearful or aggressive behavior toward each other. Do not use "alpha rolls" or scruff shakes to discipline one dog for threatening the other. This could be dangerous for you and the dogs.

Never break up a fight or wrestling match with your hands or body. Squirt the dogs with water, make a loud noise or spray them with Spray Shield™ to break them up before separating them.

The dogs will need to work out their own relationships with each other. Do not try to dictate which dog will be the leader among your dogs, based on how long the dog has lived with you, which one is oldest or largest or that one dog is your favorite. This may cause instability in their relationships and could lead to fighting problems among the dogs.

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