



DOG-DOG INTRODUCTIONS

Bringing home a new dog can be a fun and exciting experience for all the human family members. However, what about your current resident dog? How can you best ensure that your resident dog and your newly adopted dog develop a safe and healthy relationship?

Here's a brief how-to guide to facilitate positive and rewarding introductions that develop into a joyful bond for all the canine members of the family:

Neutral Location

Even if your dogs have already met in a shelter, it is best to have them meet again somewhere away from your home. Plan on having space to move away if needed, in as low stress an environment as possible.

1. Parallel Walk

1. Dogs should be on **4- to 6-foot standard leashes** (not a retractable or “Flexi” leash).
2. Use a **separate handler for each dog**, each with a treat pouch or pocket full of high-value treats.
3. Walk each dog in the same direction with **at least 10 feet between them** and keeping as much distance as necessary for the dogs to feel comfortable (even if that distance is significantly more!).
4. **Look for signs of concern** from the dogs, like raised hair on their neck or back, barking, lunging, whining, growling, fixed stares, or *inability to take treats*. If you see any of these signs, move the dogs farther apart before continuing the walk.
5. At this comfortable distance, **any time one dog looks at the other, give the looking dog a treat**.
6. **Slowly decrease the distance** between the dogs while continuing to give treats for looking at each other. If the dogs show any of the above-listed signs of discomfort, calmly move them farther apart until they relax, and you can begin again at a greater distance. **Avoid corrections** such as scolding, telling your dog “no,” or jerking the leash. This can add additional tension or frustration for the dogs.
7. Once the dogs are comfortable walking within about 5 feet from each other, **allow one to walk in front of the other. Then, switch**. Continue offering treats for looking at each other the whole time.
8. Finally, **allow the dogs to walk side by side**, remembering to constantly treat for both nice leash walking and looking at each other.

2. Meet on Leash

1. **Keep a loose leash**. Tightened leashes can increase the stress of the dogs.
2. Be ready to “leash dance.” You will need to move around with the dogs as they investigate each other to avoid the leashes becoming tangled or taught.
3. Do not back each other or the dogs into a corner. **Always have a clear escape route**.
4. Avoid shouting or speaking loudly in high pitched tones.
5. If the dogs appear tense (freeze for more than two seconds, growl, or snap); a dog startles or tries to escape or hide; or the meeting otherwise does not appear to go well, **each handler should try to get their dog's attention with treats, a squeaker, a happy voice, and movement** while separating the dogs again and going back to parallel walking.
6. If the dogs do well with the meeting, take them to an enclosed area where leashes can be dropped.



Build Positive Associations

From the very beginning, it's important that both dogs understand that good things happen to them when in the presence of the other dog. Use treats liberally, a happy voice, and avoid any scolding or punishing.

Adult Dogs and Puppies

Puppies often do not have the communication skills that adult dogs have and may not know how to appropriately interact with an adult dog. It's possible that a puppy may irritate an adult dog. Allow the adult dog to correct (grumble/head whip/muzzle punch) the puppy provided that...

1. The adult dog does not bite with pressure and is not escalating the severity of corrections.
2. The puppy is responding appropriately by giving the adult dog space.
3. You are there to supervise the entire interaction.
4. You give frequent breaks to both dogs to prevent overwhelming your resident adult dog by removing the puppy from the space.

At Home

1. Continue to supervise all interactions. **If you are unable to supervise, separate.**
2. **Continue to use yummy treats** and ample praise when the dogs are interacting together to build positive associations.
3. **Ensure each dog always has a safe space** in your home – a space where he/she can get away from the other dog, such as a crate.
4. **Feed dogs separately!** Use separate rooms, crates, or with a baby gate between them and provide separate watering stations. This will help reduce stress and conflict that may occur due a perceived lack of resources.
5. Give adult dogs **LOTS** of breaks from puppies.
6. **Keep the space clear of resource guarding risks.** Do not leave high value items such as food, bones, treats and/or favorite toys lying around.
7. **Several short sessions are better than a few long sessions.** It's okay for your dogs to primarily live in separate spaces for the first few weeks.
8. **Try to end sessions on a positive note.** Better to cut the meeting short while things are still going well than to wait until feelings are hurt!

What if My Dogs Still Don't Get Along?

Sometimes it takes more than a day of parallel walks for dogs to feel safe in each other's company. This does not mean they will never get along. If this applies to you...

1. Take them home and keep them separated either by placing them in separate rooms or by utilizing a crate rotation.
2. Some dogs do best living in the same house for a week or two before beginning introductions. Do not rush the process.
3. Take care that every time the dogs see each other through the baby gate, a crate, or at a distance, you are generously showering them with treats until seeing each other becomes the best part of their day.
4. Once they can see, hear, and smell each other without any negative reaction; they will be ready to try that parallel walk again.