



Introducing a New Dog to Dogs, Cats, or People in Your Household

Have the dogs meet in a neutral location

Choose an area unfamiliar to both/all of the dogs, then your dogs are less likely to view the newcomer as an intruder. Consider a neighbor's yard or a park. Each dog should be on a leash and handled by a separate person. Have the person walking the new dog approach from the side and "catch up" to you and your dog as you walk. Pick an area where you can walk together with a little distance between the dogs. As they walk, they can look at and sniff each other, but there will be other things to catch their interest as well. Try to do this in an area without a lot of other people and dogs so that neither dog is over-stimulated.

If you have a yard and the weather permits, it may help to bring the dogs into the yard before going into the house. At first, allow them on a long leash until you notice relaxed and "wiggly" body postures and interest from both dogs. Once they appear relaxed and interested in a friendly manner, you can allow the leashes to drop so that they can interact.

From the first meeting, help both dogs experience "good things" when they're in each other's presence. Let them sniff each other briefly, which is normal canine greeting behavior. As they do, talk to them in a happy, friendly tone of voice; never use a threatening tone. (Don't allow them to investigate and sniff each other for too long, however, as this may escalate to an aggressive response.)

After a short time, get the attention of both dogs and give each a treat in return for obeying a simple command, such as "sit" or "stay." Take the dogs for a walk and let them sniff and investigate each other at intervals. Continue with the "happy talk," food rewards, and simple commands.

Introduce one dog at a time

If you have more than one dog in your household, introduce your dogs to the new dog one at a time, rather than allowing the dogs to crowd and overwhelm the newcomer. Observe and supervise closely at first.

Be aware of each dog's body posture

- Don't force any interaction between the dogs. If the dogs ignore each other at first, or if one dog seems reluctant to interact with the other, that's okay. Give both dogs time to get comfortable. They'll interact when they're ready.
- Make the introduction positive and light-hearted. As the dogs sniff and get acquainted, encourage them in a happy tone of voice. At first, allow just a few seconds of sniffing. Then gently pull the dogs away from each other and let them walk around with their handlers. After a minute or two, you can lead the dogs back together and allow another several seconds of sniffing. These brief greetings help keep the dogs' interactions calm and prevent escalation to threats or aggression. You can also interrupt their interactions with simple obedience. After a brief sniff, lead the dogs apart, ask them to sit or lie down, and then reward them with treats.
- One body posture that indicates things are going well is a "play-bow"—one dog will crouch with her front legs on the ground and her hind end in the air. This is an invitation to play, and a posture that usually elicits friendly behavior from the other dog. Loose body movements and muscles, relaxed open mouths, and play bows are all good signs that the two dogs feel comfortable. Stiff, slow body movements, tensed mouths or teeth-baring, growls and prolonged staring are all signs that a dog feels threatened or aggressive. If you see this type of body language, quickly lead the dogs apart to give them more distance from each other. Again, practice simple obedience with them individually for treats, and then let them interact again—but this time more briefly.

- Watch carefully for body postures that indicate an aggressive response, including hair standing up on one dog's back, teeth-baring, deep growls, a stiff-legged gait, or a prolonged stare. If you see such postures, interrupt the interaction immediately by calmly getting each dog interested in something else. For example, both handlers can call their dogs, have them sit or lie down, and reward each with a treat. Try letting the dogs interact again, but this time for a shorter time period and/or at a greater distance from each other.

When and how to take your dogs home

When the dogs seem to be tolerating each other's presence without fearful or aggressive responses, and the investigative greeting behaviors have tapered off, you can take them home.

- When you first enter the house don't let the dogs jostle each other in an entryway.
- Make sure there is an environment of plenty. There should be more than one water bowl and more than one comfortable place to lie down. There should be plenty of toys, especially of kinds your dog likes, so that there's no reason for the dogs to have a conflict over access to them. If your dog has a history of guarding his toys, they should be removed for the initial introduction period, which may take a few weeks. This all needs to be arranged before you pick up the new dog.
- First, feed your dog the way you always have done and feed the new dog in a crate. Your dog should not have to worry about feeding time, leading to problems feeding the dogs. The new dog has no expectations of your home, so he shouldn't be upset by whatever feeding spot you choose. A very food-motivated dog will eat well from the start, but some dogs may need a person with them for the first day or two.
- Wait until you feel confident that the dogs are comfortable with each other before offering valuable treats such as real bones, pigs' ears, etc., and supervise when you do. If your dog is reactive with these, you may have to separate the dogs before giving them these items. If your dog never gets these kinds of treats because he is aggressive over them, that should be the rule for the new dog too.
- Your dog may try to keep the new dog away from things that are very important to him. He may block the new dog from approaching you, from resting places like dog beds and furniture, or from rooms like the family room or the bedroom. If the new dog is very anxious, he may do the same, trying to keep your dog away from him in certain locations, or even sticking with a family member and trying to keep your dog away. Do not scold or punish the dogs if this happens. Instead, get up and move if it looks like you will be the center of contention, and distract either dog if he seems to be invading a place where the other is resting.
- Keep all dogs away from areas where food is being prepared or eaten at first. If either dog is anxious about the food, there could be a conflict.
- Don't change your dog's sleeping arrangements. If he sleeps in your bedroom, you'll have to decide whether the new dog will sleep there too. That may be the only way to avoid a lot of distress on the part of the new dog. He may have to be crated, though, at least in the beginning, to avoid problems during the night when you would be unprepared to intervene.

How to help the dogs get along at home

It's crucial to avoid squabbles during the early stages of your dogs' new relationship. Pick up all toys, chews, food bowls and your current dog's favorite items. When dogs are first forming a relationship, these things can cause rivalry. These items can be reintroduced after a couple of weeks, once the dogs have started to develop a good relationship.

- Give each dog his own water and food bowls, bed and toys. For the first few weeks, only give the dogs toys or chews when they're separated in their crates or confinement areas.
- Feed the dogs in separate crates. Pick up bowls when feeding time is over. (Some dogs will compete over bowls that recently contained food.)
- Keep the dogs' playtime and interactions brief to avoid overstimulation and over arousal, which can lead to fighting.
- Confine the dogs in crates whenever you're away or can't supervise their interactions.
- Give your new dog his own confinement area. When the dogs are separated, it might be a good idea to let them get to know each other's crates. Your new dog should be crated, and your current dog should be free to move around and visit when he wants to.
- When the dogs are interacting, interrupt any growling or bullying behavior, and then quickly separate them for several minutes. Then allow them to be together again.
- Be sure to sincerely praise your dogs when they are interacting nicely.
- Spend time individually with each dog. Give each of them training and play time with you.
- If your dogs are very different in age or energy level, be sure to give the older or less energetic one his own private space where he can enjoy rest and down time.
- Very few dogs coexist without disagreement. A stare, a lifted lip or a growl is a normal dog signal that he's uncomfortable with something another dog is doing. Often the recipient of these signals will stop and move away—this is appropriate. There is likely to be some of this at first. As dogs become more comfortable with each other they should do less of this.
- Supervise and distract as needed to make sure serious conflicts don't arise, but don't punish this sort of behavior. Examples of serious conflicts include staring that cannot be interrupted, hard stiff muscles and posturing that last more than a few seconds, or full-contact fights. Please also monitor excessive "bullying" behavior from one dog towards another. If you notice that one dog is repeatedly avoiding eye contact and interactions, rolling over onto his back, or attempting to escape from the other dog, this can be an indication that one dog is uncomfortable and fearful and that the other dog is not appropriately responding to his avoidance cues.
- Don't leave the dogs together when they are alone in the house until you're reasonably sure that they are comfortable with each other.
- Supervise play between the dogs at first. Dogs who are not well acquainted may do some rough play at first and this can result in growling or snapping. Be prepared to distract and redirect the dogs to another activity if play becomes too intense. As the dogs become more familiar with each other they usually learn to modulate their play.
- Any situation that raises the level of excitement in your environment should be avoided first. The more time the dogs have to become acquainted before they have to deal with visitors or other disturbances the better. If you have children, do not let them or their friends interact with dogs without adult supervision.

Introducing puppies to adult dogs

Puppies usually pester adult dogs unmercifully. Before the age of four months, puppies may not recognize subtle body postures from adult dogs signaling that they've had enough. Well-socialized adult

dogs with good temperaments may set limits with puppies with a warning growl or snarl. These behaviors are normal and should be allowed.

Adult dogs who aren't well-socialized, or who have a history of fighting with other dogs, may attempt to set limits with more aggressive behaviors, such as biting, which could harm the puppy. For this reason, a puppy shouldn't be left alone with an adult dog until you're confident the puppy isn't in any danger. Be sure to give the adult dog some quiet time away from the puppy, and some extra individual attention as well.

Introducing your new dog to your cat(s)

To facilitate proper and positive future interactions between your family cat(s) and your new dog, keep in mind that this is a process, and that there are steps to follow for successful integration. Your cat is the existing pet and has "seniority" over the dog. You want to do everything possible to support and protect your cat while your new dog is learning his role in this new relationship. Make sure your cat has access to safe places (high perches or rooms secured with a baby gate) where he can retreat should he feel the need to escape.

When introducing a new dog to resident cats, follow the phases and steps in our handout, [Introducing a New Dog to Your Cat](#). All cats in the household should be included at the same time throughout the process. Take it slow and do not rush the process, it may take several weeks to months. Once you complete a phase successfully, proceed to the next phase. Be patient. **If you don't see progress within a week or two, the services of a professional trainer may be in order.**

Introducing your dog to new people

Your dog is experiencing a great deal of change and new things. While the tendency is to celebrate your new addition to the family by inviting friends and family over to meet your new dog, it is important not to overwhelm the dog, especially in the first few days. Keep interactions and meetings with new people calm, quiet and low-key, one person at a time, rather than everyone all at once, and over a period of several days. Interactions with new people go much smoother if the dog is allowed to approach on his own terms. Dogs handle meetings much better when they are the ones approaching, rather than the ones being approached. Never force your dog to meet a new person. Instead, instruct all new people to ignore the dog. Engage them in conversation with you while the dog is allowed to observe from a distance where he feels comfortable. Building the dog's curiosity about new people will work in your favor. Approaching a dog head-on is to be discouraged. Instead, once the dog has acclimated to the presence of the new person, have that person stand with his back to the dog, or get down on the dog's level, but with his back or side turned toward the dog. Allow the dog to approach if the dog wants to, and to sniff for as long as he wants, without anyone reaching out to pet him. If your dog indicates that he wants more interaction from a new person, instruct the person to pet the dog but keep his arm low, reaching under and up to pet the dog's chest, shoulder or under the chin, rather than reaching over the dog's head. If the dog accepts this type of touch, it is then ok to rub the dog's ears, still keeping the arm low and to the side, rather than reaching over the dog's head. Keep these interactions brief and allow the dog to retreat and recover from his new experience.

Keep in mind that it is also ok to say "no", if someone wants to meet your dog and your dog is clearly behaving in a manner that indicates he is stressed or uncomfortable. The safety of both your dog and the people around you is important, and you must support your dog and what he is telling you he would prefer.

Sources

[How to Successfully Introduce Two Dogs](#)
[Tips on Introducing a New Dog](#)
[Introducing a New Dog to Your Current Dog](#)
[Introducing a New Dog to Your Cat](#)