

Introducing a New Dog into the Household

Everything is new and scary

Try to see things from the new dog's point of view. Remember that, although you know what is going on, they do not. Rescue dogs are stressed and confused. They do not know that all will be OK or what is to come next.

For your current dog(s), try to see their side too. They may see their status as threatened by the arrival of a new dog. Though we want dogs to become instant best friends, this is often not the case. Even dogs that get along famously at the first will have moments of aggravation with each another. For this reason, a well-planned process of introduction assures you of the greatest chance for a peaceful household.

HOW LONG WILL THIS TAKE? Some dogs will breeze through this process in days, for some, it may take weeks or even months. – PATIENCE is the key.

Giving your new dog the best chance at success.

Adding a new dog to the family is a big deal, even as a temporary foster. A careful introduction period ensures success. Better to be overly cautious than to have a bad beginning you will have to repair.

1. NEUTRAL TERRITORY –If you do not know your new dog's history or you are aware of any aggression issues from either the new dog or your own – **DO NOT PROCEED** with a meeting at this point and start at step 2.

*If both your dog and the new dog have a history of being friendly with other animals you may consider proceeding with an on-leash introduction away from your home in neutral territory. If all goes well you could consider skipping to step 6. If there is any posturing, definitely take things slowly and move to step 2.

2. GETTING THEIR BEARINGS – Allow the new dog its own space for at least a couple of days. This means away from the other dogs completely. Once they are relaxed in their new surroundings (wagging tail, soft eyes, responding to your voice, not panting or pacing) you can proceed to the next step.
 - During this time, it is a great idea to switch some bedding with your pet. Get your pets scent on a towel or blanket and vice versa and put them item

in each other's resting area. This will give them a chance to get familiar with each other's scents in a relaxed state.

- Pottying should be at separate times so they can smell each other's scents.
- Do not allow fence interactions at this time. Fence fighting is common even for dogs that may not be aggressive under other circumstances.

3. A CHANCE TO OBSERVE – Allowing the dogs to see and observe one another without a face-to-face meeting will help them get to know one another without too much pressure.

- One of our volunteers is successful with early introductions using a crate or x-pen in her kitchen with a baby gate separating rooms. That way, her dogs can see the new dog and vice versa but they do not have physical interaction at this point.
- I use baby gates at either end of a hall so that the dogs can see each other from a distance.

After a period of the dogs being comfortable observing one another, and showing relaxed body language, it is time to move to the next step.

4. WALKING TOGETHER - With the help of another person, leash walk the dogs together. Keep some distance and do not allow them to interact (sniffing, etc).

The point of this exercise is to perform an activity together with you in charge and to afford them another opportunity to observe one another. You may need to do this activity for several days and in some cases even longer before you feel they are relaxed enough to move to introductions.

5. BACK TO STEP ONE - After you have successfully moved through Steps 2, 3, and 4, you are ready for NEUTRAL TERRITORY. It is safest to set up the first physical interactions away from areas that are perceived as territory. **Remember this step is on leash.*

6. SUPERVISED TIME TOGETHER - If you have had non-confrontational interactions to this point, allowing the dogs to interact off leash while supervised is the next step.

- a. This time should NOT include toys, treats, or food.
- b. If you have multiple dogs and they start to play, separate them. This is an excitable state which can lead to a confrontation between dogs that do not have a good understanding of one another.

- c. Keep the time limited so they do not become overwhelmed, ending a session on a happy note is the goal.
7. HAPPY TOGETHER – Separating the dogs whenever you are not able to supervise should continue for some time. This phase may last weeks or even months.

Things such as thunderstorms, visitors, new toys, etc., can change the dynamics of a household. Continue to separate the dogs when not supervised until you are confident they are comfortable enough with each other to not be upset by new stimulus.

CARDINAL RULES

Following these rules will only make the process of introduction easier regardless of whether your dogs are instant best friends or the process of getting to know each other is lengthy.

- SEPARATE WHEN FEEDING (separate rooms or in crates)
- BE THE BOSS - During this introduction period, it is NOT ok for the new dog or original dog(s) to snark, growl, posture, or stare each other down. Correct and re-direct. If you are experiencing this behavior, go back a step or two and allow a little more time.
- WORK FOR THOSE TREATS – A good lifelong rule is to require something of the dogs before they get a reward (sit, down, wait, etc). Say the dog's name before they are given a treat or toy. That way, when they are integrated, there is no confusion as to who is to get the treat.

* DO NOT give treats with dogs together during the introduction process.
- OLD IS FIRST – The original dog to the household should continue to get preferred treatment. If the new dog sees you first giving the original dog(s) attention, treats, or food first, they will associate the other dog's getting something desirable as a signal that they will be next to get something good. It will also help the original dog(s) not to think that the new dog threatens their way of life.
- ONE-ON-ONE – Throughout this process and after, spend one-on-one time with your new dog teaching commands and developing a line of communication. It will be easier to manage your household if your dogs understand what you want of them. Training for reliable responses is one of your best management tools!