



Introducing your New Dog to your Resident Dog

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Initial Introductions

Choose A Neutral Location: Introduce your resident dog to your new dog while they are both on leash (handled by separate people). Choose a big, open space for their first interaction – like a park or a friend’s yard. The area should be unfamiliar for your resident dog – away from his food, bed, toys and territory.

Go for a walk: Let the dogs quickly sniff each other, but don’t allow them to investigate and sniff for a long period of time. Encourage walking – not interacting.

Be Aware Of Body Postures: 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 that usually elicits friendly behavior from the other dog. Watch carefully for body postures that indicate an aggressive response, including hair standing up on the other 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 and positively getting each dog interested in something else. For example, both handlers can call their dogs to them, have them sit or lie down and reward each with a treat. The dogs will become interested in the treats, which will prevent the situation from escalating into aggression. Try letting the dogs interact again, but this time for a shorter time period and/or at a greater distance from each other.

NOTE: If you have more than one resident dog in your household, it may be best to introduce the resident dogs to the new dog one at a time. Two or more resident dogs may “gang up” on the newcomer.

Going Home

Once 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. Whether you choose to take them in the same or separate vehicles will depend on their size, how well they ride in the car, how trouble-free the initial introduction has been, and how many dogs are involved.

After you arrive home, continue supervising your dogs, keeping your new dog on leash. When you cannot supervise (i.e.: when taking a shower), separate your dogs, putting your new dog in a crate or dog-proofed area. Keep separating the dogs when you’re not home until they’ve proven that they can get along.

Try not to change your resident dog’s routine. Be sure to continue to spend time with your resident dog and praise him whenever the new dog approaches.

Do not feed the dogs next to each other. Put them in separate rooms and close the door or stand between the rooms. Prevent any interactions while preparing food, while they are eating and immediately afterwards. Pick up food bowls once both dogs have finished eating. Also, refrain from giving either dog long lasting treats or bones while the dogs are together.

Avoid playing high arousal games with the dogs at first. Tug of war or a fast game of fetch may cause a fight to break out if both dogs are energized.

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 growl or snarl. These behaviors are normal and should be allowed. Adult dogs that aren't well-socialized, or that 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 individual attention.

When to Get Help

If the introduction of a new dog doesn't go smoothly, contact a professional immediately. Dogs can be severely injured in fights, and the longer the problem continues, the harder it can be to resolve. Conflicts between dogs in the same family can often be resolved with professional help. Punishment won't work and could make things worse.