



INTRODUCING DOGS TO DOGS

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The only thing better than a dog is two dogs!

When bringing a new dog into your home with a resident dog, the introduction process should be controlled and gradual. It is important for the new dog and your resident dog to start off on the right paw. While some dogs take change in stride, others need guidance, so be patient. Here are 4 steps that can help you ensure a successful introduction:

The first introduction should always happen at a neutral location

1

NEUTRAL LOCATION

Some dogs are more tense on a leash as a tight leash tends to relay tension to dogs. Keep your voice light and happy to help the dogs relax and **keep the leashes loose**. Remember that even though your dog may have always done well around other dogs that does not mean she will instantly love this new pooch and want to share everything with her. It is important to have them **meet on neutral ground** to set them up for success. Take them to an area with which neither of them is familiar such as a park. You can even go for a walk together. If you have more than one resident dog, it is best to introduce one a time.

Be aware of what the alarming dogs body clues might display

2

BODY LANGUAGE

Watch body language closely for clues. One body posture that indicates things are going well is a "**play bow**." The dog will lower her front while keeping her rear up. This is a friendly invitation like offering someone a hug. Not all humans are huggers, however, just like not all dogs will want to play with a stranger. **Watch carefully for how the other dog responds** in case of an escalation, including hair standing up on the other dog's back, stiff walk or a prolonged stare among other alarming clues. If this happens, interrupt immediately by calmly and positively refocusing the dogs on something else. Then, try letting the dogs interact again but for a shorter amount of time and/or at a greater distance. Keep in mind that **introducing puppies to adult dogs may look a little different**. Before the age of 4 months, puppies may not recognize subtle body postures from adult dogs signaling that they've had enough, therefore it is your job to give the adult dog a break. (See our "Introducing Puppies to Adult dogs" handout for more information)

3

PACE AND SPACE

Let the dogs determine the pace of the introduction

First impressions are everything when you're introducing two dogs to each other. How the dogs interact initially can set the tone for their entire relationship. It is possible the dogs will just want to play or they may need more time to walk comfortably next to each other. The most important thing is to be patient and take this slowly, and not force them to interact. **Use the following instructions below for a safe introduction:**



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- 3.1** Once the dogs are able to see each other at a close proximity, allow one dog to walk behind the other, and then switch. If they both are comfortable, allow them to walk side by side. Finally, let the dogs interact under close supervision. If one or both of the dogs show any signs of stress, or agitation, consider taking a short break or proceeding more slowly with the introduction.
- 3.2** Walk the dogs on leashes parallel to each other no closer than 8-10 feet, either in a straight line or concentric circles. Make sure you are far enough apart that the dogs are not showing signs of stress about each other.
- 3.3** Slowly decrease the distance, no more than a foot at a time. Continue monitoring for signs of stress and bring them closer until they are close enough to greet each other.
- 3.4** If parallel walking, allow one dog to move ahead of the other in a straight line, so the dog in the back can do a 3 second sniff of the other dog's butt. Bring them back to parallel walking and repeat this with the other dog. If walking in a concentric circle, have one dog slow down for the other to sniff their butt, then change direction of the circle to allow the other dog the chance to do the same.
- 3.5** With a relaxed leash, let the dogs meet face-to-face for 3 seconds then briskly move away talking to your dog in a happy voice. Scatter some food or treats at a distance once away from the other dog.
- 3.6** Allow longer meetings in increments of 3 to 5 seconds. Ensure you allow the dogs to move nose-to-nose to nose-to-rear end. If the dogs are getting along well on a leash, you can allow supervised off-leash play in a secure area.

When all other 3 steps have gone well they are ready to interact at home

When the dogs seem ready, they can go home. First, allow both dogs to check out the **outside of your home** (your yard, if you have one), and give them plenty of time to relieve themselves before going in.

If you have not done so already, **prepare your home** by picking up all food dishes, all toys, and set up any crates, beds or baby gates you need. Some canines will defend toys that they have ignored for years.

Be aware of situations which could lead to conflict - for example, when the dogs get overly excited. Bring the dogs inside, and closely monitor them when they are together, rewarding with treats and praise, until you are 100% confident they are comfortable and safe with each other.

If at any point this introduction seems unsuccessful, keep the dogs separate and call our Dog Behavior Counselor for guidance.



SUPERVISED TIME AT HOME