



Introducing Your New Dog to Your Resident Dog

Properly introducing your new dog and your resident dog(s) to each other is very important in creating a positive and harmonious relationship. This relationship can take time to build, so it is important to be patient and go slowly. It can take time for dogs to adjust to each other. Be sure to follow these tips to help with a smooth transition.

Pick a neutral location for the introduction:

It is important to choose a location that your resident dog will not perceive as her territory. **Keep in mind that a dog park is NOT considered a neutral location, as there are so many smells and other dogs here.** Each dog that you are introducing should be kept on a leash by a separate person, so you will need one person for each dog. At your neutral location, start by having the dogs walking parallel to each other. Begin at a distance, and gradually close the gap by coming closer and closer until the dogs are walking side by side. Watch the dogs carefully as they get closer. If they pull to get to one another, that is fine. Encourage them to introduce properly by allowing butt sniffs. **Pay attention to any lunging, growling, stiff bodies, and fixation, as these are not positive behaviors.**

Use positive reinforcement:

You want to make sure that from the very first meeting, both dogs expect “good things” while they are around each other. While keeping the leashes loose, allow them to sniff each other, as this is a normal canine greeting behavior. As they greet each other, talk to them in a happy and friendly tone. **Never use a threatening tone of voice.** You can give treats to each of the dogs while they are around each other. This will help the dogs to associate good things when they are together. Just be sure to give the treats when the dogs are not side by side, until you are sure that none of the dogs will resource guard.

Be aware of body posture:

Watching your dogs’ body postures is very important during the introductory period. Some postures to look for:

- **Play bow** – This indicates that things are going well. One dog will crouch down with her front legs on the ground and her hind end in the air. This posture is an invitation to play and it usually well received by the other dog(s).
- **Escalating responses** – Hair standing up on the dog’s back, teeth-baring, deep growls, stiff body, prolonged stares, and forward body posture. These postures are concerning, and if you see them, you should interrupt the interaction immediately by calmly and positively getting each dog interested in something else. Once you draw their attention away from each other, you can reward them with a treat to encourage a positive interaction. You can try to let them interact again, but this time for a shorter period of time and at a greater distance from each other. Be sure you go slowly.

Taking the dogs home:

When the dogs seem to be tolerating each other without fearful or aggressive responses (at the neutral introduction location), you can now move to the home. You may want to consider transporting them in separate vehicles to start with. This will depend on factors like their size, how well they tolerate car rides, how the initial introductions went, and how many dogs you need to transport home. If you are at all unsure about having them in close proximity, you should use caution, and take them home in separate vehicles.

Once you get the dogs home:

Do not leave the dogs alone, until you are absolutely certain that they will get along. In the beginning of stages introducing your dogs, make sure that you feed them separately and keep toys picked up, until you are sure that none of the dogs will guard their resources. Set up the new dog in an isolated area, and keep him in this area when you are not around. Use this area to house the new dog while you are not around, to let the new dog sleep at night, and to give your resident dogs periodic breaks. During this introductory period, take all of the dogs on frequent walks together, as this will help them to build a bond. Taking your time and not rushing this process is extremely important, so go slow!

If you are introducing a new puppy to your adult dog:

Puppies can often pester adult dogs relentlessly. Often times, young puppies may not recognize body postures given by the adult dog that are signaling that they have had enough. Adult dogs who are well socialized may set limits with the puppy with a growl or snarl. This is a normal behavior and should be allowed to happen. If the adult dog is not well socialized, he may try to set limits with more aggressive behaviors such as biting, which could harm the puppy. It is very important that you do not leave an adult dog alone with the puppy until you are absolutely certain the puppy will not be harmed. Because puppies can be relentless, provide the adult dog with plenty of quiet time away from the puppy, and some individual attention as well.