

Introducing your New Dog to your Resident Dog

We understand that dogs vary and that your current dog may be good with dogs, but in order to introduce a new dog with a success in mind, it is always best to go slowly. It is better for the dogs to have their first interactions be calm and controlled than to have too much freedom, have a conflict and then have to undo that. Here are suggestions for slow and safe introductions that help with long term success.

Initial Introductions

Go for a walk: Each dog has his own person. The purpose is to go for a walk, not to meet each other. Encourage walking - not interacting. This is such a great way to ease tension and take away pressure for both dogs and allow them to become accustomed to each other's scents.

Choose A Neutral Location: After the walk (or walks), introduce your resident dog to your new dog while they are both on a loose leash (handled by separate people). Choose a big, open space for their first interaction - like a park or a friend's large back yard. The area should be unfamiliar for your resident dog: away from his food, bed, toys and territory. Remember to keep them on a loose leash at first. If a neutral location is not available and you have a large fenced in yard that your current dog is not protective of, then you can try the introductions there, on loose leashes.

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 uncomfortable response: hair standing up on the dog's back, teeth baring, deep growls, a stiff legged gait, freezing in place, 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. This is when it is good not to allow further interactions and go on a leash walk instead.

NOTE: If you have more than one resident dog in your household, introduce the resident dogs to the new dog one at a time. Two or more resident dogs may overwhelm the newcomer.

The Next Few Weeks

Continue supervising your dogs, in some cases 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. 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 may be appropriate with puppies and set limits 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 show inappropriate 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 lots of attention when the puppy is around. You are basically saying to your current dog that he gets more attention when the puppy is around and should be happy with the puppy's presence.

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. Please remember not to use punishment as this often makes things worse.

In Summary:

- Go for a walk with the dogs (each dog has his own handler) and encourage walking, not interacting.
- Introduce your resident dog to your new dog while they are both on leash, in a big open space, and away from the resident's dog's food, bed, toys and territory.
- If you have a large fenced in yard, and your dog is not protective of your yard, you can try the introductions there, on leash.
- Your resident dog's routine should stay the same.
- Your new dog will need to be kept in a crate or dog-proof room when you cannot supervise (i.e. when taking a shower).
- Increase praise to your resident dog whenever the new dog approaches.
- Very important: do not feed the dogs next to each other. Put them in separate rooms and close the door or stand between rooms. Prevent any interactions while preparing food, while they are eating and immediately afterwards. Pick up the bowls once both dogs have finished.
- Refrain from giving either dog bones or long lasting food treats.
- Avoid playing high arousal games (like tug-of-war or fetch) with the dogs at first. A fight may break out if they are both energized.
- Separate the dogs when you are not home until you are sure they can get along.