

## Introducing Your New Dog to Your Current Dog



Although the majority of dog owners (63%) own just one dog, 25% own two, and 12% own three or more. So if you've decided to get a second or third dog, you're in good company!

Adding another dog to your home can bring you and your current dog more fun and companionship. It's important to realize however that your current dog might feel like your children would if you chose their friends and then insisted they share their toys with them. In the long run, things will likely work out, but in the beginning it's smart to take steps to ensure that your dogs' relationship gets off to a great start.

Two key angles are 1) the actual introduction and 2) management of your new dog.

### Introductions

- Leave your current dog at home when you pick up your new dog. One of the worst things you can do is to throw the two of them together in your car and hope for the best!
- Introduce your dogs on neutral territory, like on a walk through your neighborhood, in a nearby park or in a friend's yard. Have two people, one to handle each dog, while keeping the dogs on leashes.
- To minimize tension, try to keep the dogs' leashes loose so that they're not choking or feeling pressure on their throats. Harnesses are ideal.
- Don't force interaction between the dogs. If the dogs ignore each other at first, or if one dog seems reluctant to interact with the other, that's okay. Give both dogs time to get comfortable. They'll interact when they're ready.
- Make the introduction positive. As the dogs sniff and get acquainted, encourage them in a happy tone of voice. At first, allow just a few seconds of sniffing. Then gently pull the dogs away from each other and then walk around some more. After a minute or two, you can lead the dogs back together and allow another several seconds of sniffing. These brief greetings help keep the dogs' interactions calm and prevent escalation to threats or aggression. You can also interrupt their interactions with simple obedience. After brief sniffs, lead the dogs apart, ask them to sit or lie down, and then reward them with treats.
- Closely observe the dogs' body language. It helps you understand what they're feeling and whether things are going well or not. Loose body movements and muscles, relaxed open mouths, and play bows (when a dog puts his elbows on the ground and his hind end in the air) are all good signs that the two dogs feel comfortable. Stiff, slow body movements, tensed mouths or teeth-baring, growls and prolonged staring are all signs that someone's feeling threatened or aggressive. If you see this, quickly guide the dogs farther away from each other. Again, practice simple obedience with them individually for treats, and then let them interact again.
- Once the dogs appear to be tolerating each other without fearful or threatening behavior, you're ready to take them home. Before you take them inside, walk them together around your house or apartment building.

## **Management: the first couple of weeks home**

- Be patient. Bringing a new dog home requires adjustments from everyone, especially your current pets. It can take time for your dogs to build a comfortable relationship.
- It's crucial to avoid squabbles during the early stages of your dogs' new relationship. Pick up all toys, chews, food bowls and your current dog's favorite items since these things can cause rivalry. Reintroduce these items after a couple of weeks, once the dogs have started to develop a good relationship.
- Give each dog his own water and food bowls, bed and toys. For the first few weeks, only give the dogs toys or chews when they're separated in their crates or confinement areas.
- Feed the dogs in completely separate areas. Pick up bowls when feeding time is over. (Some dogs will compete over bowls that recently contained food.)
- Keep the dogs' playtime and interactions brief to avoid overstimulation and overarousal, which can lead to fighting.
- Confine the dogs in separate areas of your home whenever you're away or can't supervise their interactions.
- Give your new dog his own confinement area. When the dogs are separated, try letting them get to know each other through a barrier, like a pet gate. Your new dog should be gated in his confinement area, and your current dog should be free to move around and visit when he wants to.
- When the dogs are interacting, interrupt any growling or bullying behavior with a phrase like "Too bad," and then quickly separate them for several minutes. Then allow them to be together again. If your dogs seem to react poorly to each other often, don't hesitate to contact us for further help.
- Avoid using your hands or body to intervene during a dog quarrel. When dogs are fighting, they are highly aroused and it's never safe to use your hands to separate. Use your voice, a loud noise or water to stop a fight. If those don't work, place a chair between the dogs or pull them apart by the rear legs.
- Be sure to happily praise your dogs when they are interacting nicely.
- Spend time individually with each dog. Give each of them time with you for play, training, errands, walks, etc. Allow socialization with other dogs as well if appropriate.
- If your dogs are very different in age or energy level, be sure to give the older or less energetic one his own private space where he can rest in peace.