

TRAINING RESOURCES



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HOW TO INTRODUCE A NEW DOG TO YOUR RESIDENT DOG



There are few things
in life you have
control over but,
**THIS IS ONE OF
THEM.**

You are the only one who can guide the introductions to ensure that the new dog and your resident dog(s) in your home have the absolute best chance of co-existing peacefully and happily.

To throw dogs together and “let them work it out” is an urban myth. **DON'T DO IT.** Dogs that are new to each other are often anxious, over-excited and stressed and that state of the mind is the perfect setup for dogs on both sides to make bad choices.

While a friendly and social dog may have no problem meeting another dog face-to-face while on a walk or at the dog park, dogs that are not as friendly and/or socialized need a little extra assistance to make sure a good "first impression" is made. Much like people, first impressions with dogs are also very important. If your dog falls into the category of needing a little extra help in the department of being friendly to new dogs, this page should be of some assistance to you. By taking the time and effort to remove that excitement, stress and anxiety from the interaction—while giving them human guidance—sets them up for success, not failure.

These are guidelines. The techniques and tips mentioned below are to help prevent your dog's "first impression" on another dog lead to dominance and/or aggression. They are flexible according to how well adjusted your resident dog(s) are and the temperament of your new dog.

Do not cause tension!

- Remember to remain calm during the introduction process. Your dog will feed off of your energy, so by remaining in a calm state of mind will help allow for your dog to do the same. If you are anxious, nervous, jumpy, etc., your dog will sense that and he too will become anxious, nervous, jumpy, etc.
- Typically, the better trained your dog is prior to meeting new dogs, being introduced to new situations, etc., the better! Your dog knowing basic obedience beforehand will definitely make things easier for both you and your dog.
- Make sure that during the introduction process you are holding the leash in a comfortable manner. Like always, your dog should be walking by your side, not 4 feet in front of you. Keep the leash tension-free; meaning that you should not hang on the leash making it tight. Tightening the leash should ONLY be used for corrections.
- In general, keep extra verbalization to your dog to a minimal. Try to stick to the commands he knows, and do not use extra communication, such as "stop it", "move over", "what are you doing?", "you are not listening!", or any other terms/phrases people tend to use that are irrelevant to the actual training/handling of their dog.

Once you are home with your foster dog

Allow your foster dog to settle down and get to know your surroundings first before you start introductions to unfamiliar animals. Take your time and create a stress-free environment. Allow the dog to become comfortable in his own room. Once he is comfortable, let him explore the rest of the house for short periods each day while the dog is out or in another room. This will allow them to pick up each other's scent. After a few days, allow the two to meet but keep the dogs on a leash.

1. Allow the dogs to meet on neutral grounds (down the street, etc.). If you have the dogs meet in the house, the yard, etc., then you have the chance of your dog being protective of his home and therefore aggressive. Make the introduction place somewhere semi-quiet (not a dog park) so the humans and dogs can work without distraction.
2. Make sure both dogs are on-leash and are both calm when the meeting takes place. A hyper dog that is barking and jumping around will escalate any potential negative behavior your dog may have and will make issues worse.
3. A lot of people will say to walk the dogs straight towards each other (face to face), or walk them single-file (one behind the other). In fact, if you look online for ways to properly introduce dogs, these are probably the top two suggestions you will find. We

do NOT recommend either of these methods, as walking the dogs straight towards each other causes escalation in potential bad behavior. Walking them single-file will allow one dog (whoever is in front) to feel more in control/superior. By walking the dogs' side-by-side, you are allowing the dogs to be equal. When you are walking the dogs, have both dogs to the same side of their handlers (either on each handler's left side, or on their right side-- most trainers recommend generally walking dogs on the left)... so the pattern would be "dog, human, dog, human" or the opposite "human, dog, human, dog"... the dogs should not be in the middle of the two humans together, as then they could get into direct contact with each other and it would be harder to control them from bad behavior.

4. If one of the dogs goes to the bathroom during the introduction process, once that dog is DONE going to the bathroom and he/she walks away from that area, the other dog can be allowed to sniff the "waste". The dog is ONLY allowed to sniff the waste, not the other dog (until you get to step #3 below in "The Introduction").

The introduction

- 1) Have one dog standing with his handler up further on the sidewalk, have the other handler with the other dog walk up behind them (do not end up directly behind the other dog at this time, as the dog approaching the stationary dog should not be allowed to sniff the other dog yet) and then once they are at the point where they meet up, the stationary handler and dog should begin walking so that everybody is walking together side by side. Do not let either dog sniff the other yet.
- 2) Continue walking both dogs for about 5-10 minutes. Remain relaxed, as the dogs can sense if their handlers are tense. If either dog tries to be dominant/protective (tail standing straight up, hair on back standing up, trying to put their head high over the other dog's shoulders/neck/head, growling, mounting the other dog, curling upper lip, staring at the other dog in a very intense and/or statue-like manner), do a quick jerk/snap of the leash and an "AHH!" sound to snap them out of the bad behavior. Then, continue your walk. DO NOT stop and make a big deal over bad behavior once the situation is corrected.

SIGNS OF DOMINANCE OR AGGRESSION

- tail standing straight up
- hair on back standing up
- trying to put their head high over the other dog's shoulders/neck/head
- growling
- mounting the other dog
- curling upper lip
- staring at the other dog in a very intense and/or statue-like manner

NOTE: When completing step 2, it would be best to have the dog that is presenting no social/introduction issues approach the other dog (whom is presenting issues with being social and with meeting new dogs).



- 3) Once the dogs have walked with each other and appear to be calm and comfortable with each other, they can now begin to smell each other's behinds in a CONTROLLED manner. Meaning, do NOT just let them both smell each other freely, but stop walking and allow the dog who appears most relaxed to slowly (and not in a dominant/aggressive manner) approach the other dog's bottom to sniff for a few seconds. During this time, the handler of the dog who is standing still to be sniffed needs to hold their leash with one hand and put their other arm on their dog's neck, to prevent that dog from turning around and biting the other dog as he/she is smelling them. Do not tightly restrain the dog's neck though (as he will feel trapped and will panic) and do not kneel down and get your face in the way (you should be standing up still, just slightly bending over to block the neck with one arm to prevent turning around). Once the first dog is done sniffing, it's the second dog's turn, so do the exact same thing for him/her. Once the second dog is done sniffing, continue walking again and do not let them sniff each other while walking. Again, correct any negative behavior, as stated above. Remember, do not have the leashes tight and tense during this introduction, or the dogs will feed off of that. Only tighten the leash briefly for corrections.

NOTE: When praising the dogs during the introduction process, use verbal recognition of good behavior. You want the dogs to feel good about meeting each other, so when either of the dogs are acting in a calm, friendly manner (not being dominant and/or aggressive, nor staring directly at the other dog... but walking nicely and/or while paying attention to their handler's directions) you can tell the dog "good boy/girl". DO NOT give verbal praise in an overly high-pitched or overly excited tone. While your tone of voice needs to be happy and proud, it should NOT be to the extreme that causes the dog to become overly excited and distracted from his current duty in walking nicely with the other dog.

- 4) If/when the dogs are remaining calm and comfortable you can walk for a few minutes again, allowing the dogs to sniff each other again the exact same way. After that, continue walking.

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- 5) Continue the walking/sniffing methods until both dogs appear to be OK with each other. Then you can allow the dogs to stop and slowly mingle some more. Do not stand there and let the dogs mingle for minutes... but let them mingle a little, then walk again... mingle a little longer, then walk again, and so on until they both feel comfortable with each other.

Some common mistakes

Holding the leash too tensely as dogs react with defensiveness

Leaving toys and chews around the house. This can cause resource guarding which can escalate very quickly. Remove all toys and chews before you arrive home with your foster dog

Feeding your foster dog with your resident dog. It is best to separate them initially, and to supervise always

Over-stimulating your foster dog with introductions to many people or neighbors' dogs

TAKING IT SLOW SETS THEM UP FOR SUCCESS, NOT FAILURE

The bottom line is that you do not want to rush into the introduction process, as first impressions are everything. It is much better to spend 20 minutes on a walk/introduction, than rushing into it all in 5 minutes and causing the dogs to have issues with each other for the rest of their lives.

The slower you take it, the greater chance of a successful integration. You might think (or want) your dogs to get along right off the bat, but chances are if you put them together too quickly, that relationship will get off on the wrong foot. You want this to work out and work out well. For that to happen, YOU have to be the one who exercises control, patience and sense. Your dogs' depend on you and you need to step up!