

Introducing Your New Dog to Your Current Dog

It is important for the new dog and your dog to start off on the right paw. While some dogs take change in stride, others need guidance.

Neutral ground

To set the dogs up for success, have them meet on NEUTRAL ground. This can be accomplished by meeting at a park or just a few blocks away from your home or in a neighbor's fenced yard. If you have a neutral fenced area then take the leashes off for the introduction.

Loose leash

Some dogs are more tense on a leash. If there is no safe area for an off leash introduction then have both dogs on a loose leash. A tight leash tends to telegraph tension to the dogs. Keep your voice light and happy to help the dogs relax.

Remember that even though your dog may have always done well around other dogs that does not mean he will instantly love this new guy and want to share everything with him. Relationships take time to develop.

Space

Avoid standing around in a tight circle around the dogs. Give the dogs plenty of space to greet each other. (Think of your own "personal space" when meeting someone new. If someone were to stand too close to you, your anxiety or tension would increase.) Dogs are very space oriented and any emotions of anxiety or fear can be reduced or avoided by increasing their "breathing room".

Take a break

After a minute or two call the dogs away from each other and walk around for a bit. This will help to diffuse any tension that might be brewing.

If they start to play right away and all seems perfect, let them play for a few minutes then end the play by calling the dogs away from each other in a happy voice. This will help them to end the play on a happy note and avoid any escalation of play that might cause trouble and it leaves the dogs wanting more!

Signs of stress

Dogs deal with stress in different ways. Stay calm and watch for signs of stress that may include excessive drinking, pacing, over active "out of control" behavior, attaching to one member of the family, trying to escape, hiding.

Take extra precautions especially in the first few days. Keep his identification tags on him and be careful to keep him secure in the yard or house until he understands that this is "home".

Take a Walk

A great way to introduce two dogs with minimal tension is to go for a walk instead of standing around. Walk around the block together or if you are meeting in a park walk forward in the same direction giving both dogs space to check each other out from a distance of several feet. This way they can observe each other, sniff each other's scent in the air and sniff and mark each other's pee. They will learn much about each other as they do this much the same way you would if you were to read a person's resume.

The best way to do this is with two people, one for each dog. It is difficult to juggle two dogs at the same time. If tensions escalate, you want to be able to separate the dogs quickly.

Forever Home

When the dogs seem relaxed, return home. Allow both dogs to check out your yard. If the yard is securely fenced then, at this point, take the leashes off. Give the dogs plenty of time to relieve themselves and you may want to have two water bowls available in the yard. This is the beginning of "life together" for them.

If you have not done so already prepare the house by picking up all food dishes and all toys. Some dogs will defend toys that they have ignored for years. Close off any areas that will be off limits.

If you have cats, please read the file on introducing your new dog to cats.

Grand Tour

Have a family member or friend stay outside with your dog while you and the new dog go into the house for a tour. Do this on leash so that you can gently guide him. Grabbing him by the collar would be very threatening so use the leash.

If he lifts his leg in the house, as males sometimes do when stressed, say "No. Outside." And usher him outside. Nothing else. He will have gotten the point.

Since his bladder should have been pretty empty there should not be much to clean up but it is VERY important to clean it up and wipe it down with an odor eliminator like Nature's Miracle or he AND your existing dog will remark the spot.

If the marking continues, please read the file on re-house training an adult dog.

Wait a bit and go back into the house to continue the tour. When the tour is over take him back outside to join your dog while you set up any crates, bed or baby gates. Then bring the dogs into the house one at a time. Bring in your dog first. Let the new dog come in second. I suggest this because if there is going to be any rivalry it tends to happen as two dogs crowd into a door way or in competition for attention from you.

Keep your voice light and happy.

Dinner Time

Feed the dogs their dinner separately away from foot traffic and each other so they may eat in peace. We strongly suggest crating or feeding in separate rooms at first. Even a dog that is usually mild mannered can become food aggressive when a new dog comes into the house.

Feed the dogs simultaneously and do not allow them access to each other until they are both finished.

Don't leave the food out all day (free feeding) as this may cause one dog to develop food guarding behaviors and you will have no idea who is eating and who is not.

How to Give Treats

Have the dogs sit apart from each other not side by side. Imagine you are the top of a triangle and they are the other two points of the triangle. This gives them some "breathing room" and decreases the need to compete. For now, give them their treats simultaneously. Eventually, you can teach them to wait for their "turn" by saying each dogs name as you give the treat so that they begin to learn to take turns. Treats should be ones that are eaten quickly so there is no need to guard.

Bed Time

Confine the new dog at night and when no one is home. This will give both dogs a break from each other until they are more comfortable sharing space and will allow piece of mind for you.

Whether you use baby gates, a crate or a closed door depends on the two dogs. Since the dogs have only recently met they will appreciate time alone each day. Once they are in a comfortable daily routine more freedom may be given and the dogs will choose their favorite spots to sleep and spend their days.

If you are considering using baby gates when you are not home, try them when you are home first. Some dogs jump baby gates easily. You'll want to know this before you rely upon them when you are gone.

Enjoy!

Having more than one dog can bring so much more joy and love in to your life and that of your pets. Two dogs equals more than two times the love.

Please remember that all dogs are different. The advice above is advice only. Pay attention, watch your dogs' behavior and respond accordingly.

If you have any questions, please email MAESSR at springerrescue@yahoo.com.