

Tips on introducing your dog to a new four legged friend

Adding another dog to your household can bring you and your current dog more fun and companionship. However, it's important to realize that your current dog, might respond differently than what you expected. Remember that dogs may respond differently to another fur friend in their home than they would outside of their territory (i.e. dog park, friend's house). To the dogs that are already in your home, a new companion can be an intrusion on their territory. To the new dog, being thrust into an unknown environment leaves it without any rules to follow or boundaries to respect.

If you have never had another dog in your home until now we encourage you to schedule a play date with a friend or family dog at your home to test the waters before committing to a rescue dog.

Maximizing the potential for a great relationship between your new dog and your current dog is a two-step process. It involves the actual introduction and then management of the new dog in your home in the first few weeks.

Below are guidelines for making smooth and safe introductions and ensuring that your dogs' relationship gets off to a great start.

Introduction

- Leave your current dog at home when you pick up your new dog.
 - This also is a great time for you, as the pack leader, to bond with your new companion.
- Have two people for the introduction, one to handle each dog.
- Have each dog wearing a harness and a leash.
- Introduce your dogs on neutral territory, like on a short walk down the block or in a neighbor's yard.
 - To minimize tension, try to keep the dogs' leashes loose so that they're not choking or feeling pressure thus putting them on alert.
- Don't force any 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. 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.
- You may want to interrupt their interactions with simple obedience after a brief sniff just to present a calm environment. (i.e. lead the dogs apart, ask them to sit and then reward them with treats).
- Closely observe the dogs' body language. Their postures can help you understand what they're feeling and whether things are going well or not.
 - Positive language: 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.

- Negative language: Stiff, slow body movements, tensed mouths or teeth-baring, growls and prolonged staring are all signs that a dog feels threatened or aggressive.
 - If you see negative body language, quickly lead the dogs apart to give them more distance from each other. Again, practice simple obedience with them individually for treats, and then let them interact again.
- Once the dogs' greeting behaviors have tapered off and they appear to be tolerating each other without fearful or threatening behavior, you're ready to take them home.
 - Your original dog enters the home first with you, and then you bring the new dog in. This allows your original dog to "invite" their new pack member into the territory.
- Be patient. Bringing a new dog home requires that everyone make some adjustments, especially your current pets. And it will take time for your dogs to build a comfortable relationship.
 - Remember that dogs can feel your tension so if you are nervous you are adding negative vibes to the environment
 - Think positively and be calm. Everything will work out great.

Building the New Relationship

- It's crucial to avoid squabbles during the early stages of your dogs' new relationship. Pick up your original dog's favorite toys and chews.
 - These items can be reintroduced after a couple of weeks, once the dogs have started to develop a good relationship.
 - For the first few weeks, only give the dogs toys or chews when they're separated in their crates or confinement areas.
- Give each dog his own water and food bowls, bed and toys.
- Feed the dogs in separate areas. Same room is fine.
 - Pick up bowls when feeding time is over.
- Make sure there is adult supervision during the dogs' playtime. This also allows you to offer brief interruptions to avoid overstimulation and overarousal, which can lead to fighting.
- Confine the dogs in separate crates whenever you're away or can't supervise their interactions.
 - If your original dog is normally not crated that is fine however your new dog needs to be crated until the relationship between the two dogs is strong which will take a few months.
- When the dogs are growling or bullying each other quickly separate them for several minutes and give a command to reflect your action (i.e. "No growl").
 - If your dogs seem to react poorly to each other often, don't hesitate to contact the rescue agent.
- Be sure to sincerely praise your dogs when they are interacting nicely.
- Spend time individually with each dog. Give each of them training time with you and playtime with other dogs outside your home.
- 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 enjoy rest and down time.