



Peninsula Humane Society & SPCA

# Dog-Dog Introductions

**Adopting a new dog can be a wonderful addition, and it is important that your new friend get off to a good start in his or her new home! Many people are unsure of how to introduce their new dog to their resident dog or dogs. Here are some guidelines for a safe and successful introduction.**

## Supplies

At least 2 people to handle the dogs, 2 leashes, good treats (hotdog pieces, cheese, freeze dried liver), 2 metal pans, pan with water

- 1. Choose a neutral location to introduce the dogs for the first time.** This could be any place that is unfamiliar to your resident dog, such as a new park or a friend's backyard. Remove any items that could cause rivalry, such as toys, chews, or food bowls. You could also bring your resident dog to the shelter and introduce the dogs there! This way, you can see how the dogs respond to each other before the adoption is final.
- 2. Enlist the help of a friend or family member.** Have each dog on a leash, held by a separate handler. If you own multiple dogs, introduce them to your new dog one at a time. During the duration of the introduction, the handlers should have a friendly, positive demeanor. Speak, in an upbeat, relaxed, happy tone of voice, and hold the leashes loosely.
- 3. Take your time and stay positive!** Avoid letting the dogs run up to each other and meet head-on. Instead, have each handler spend a few minutes with their dog standing about 20 feet away from the other dog and handler. The handlers should have a supply of good treats, and they should reward their dog with a treat every time he or she focuses on them, instead of the other dog. Reward and praise extra when a dog looks at the other dog and then quickly looks at the handler.
- 4. When both dogs are focusing well on their handlers, have the handlers move closer together.** Each time you move closer, repeat getting the dogs attention after he or she looks at the other dog.
- 5. Be aware of the body postures of both dogs.** A good posture is a relaxed body with no prolonged staring. A stiff posture with prolonged staring is not a good sign; increase the distance between the dogs and avoid moving the dogs any closer together until both dogs can focus on their handlers.
- 6. Keep contact short and sweet!** When you feel comfortable having the dogs physically meet, avoid having them rush towards each other head-on. Instead, have the handlers circle around each other, moving closer and closer until the dogs come into contact. While speaking in happy, relaxed voices and holding the leashes loosely, let the dogs sniff one another for 3-5 seconds and then have each handler get their dogs attention and lure him or her away from the other dog. If a dog behaves well, offer praise and reward with treats!
- 7. Know that each dog may respond differently.** The response of each dog will determine how you should proceed.
  - a. A dog may respond playfully, and display a wiggly body with face licking and play bows** (the dog lowers its front legs and leaves the back end raised). If this is the case, praise the dog for its good play behavior and continue short introductions. If the dogs begin to play together, interrupt the play every couple of minutes, or if the play becomes rough.
  - b. Another dog may act like a bully.** This dog will have a stiff posture, and may stare hard at the other dog, have raised hair, or bared teeth. If you witness a dog being a bully, say "Too bad!" and remove the bully dog to a spot where he or she cannot see the other dog. Ignore the bully dog for a couple of minutes. After this short "Time-out," repeat the introduction, again maintaining a positive, relaxed demeanor. Continue to give "Time-outs" for any unwanted bully behavior.
  - c. A dog may also appear scared and unsure, trying to avoid the other dog while having a stiff**



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- body posture. If this is the case, move the dog that is not scared away. Reward the unsure dog whenever it looks at the other dog, and continue the short introductions, always moving the other dog away from the unsure dog. Reward and praise the unsure dog immediately after these short meetings.
8. **Go for a walk!** An excellent way to have dogs get off to a good start after meeting one another for the first time is to take them on a walk together. This will help them develop the sense that they are a team.
  9. **Prepare for a spat.** At some point during the introduction process, the dogs may engage in a short spat to work out their differences. These short fights may be frightening, but most often do not result in injury. However, use your own judgment as to what behavior is acceptable. If at any point you feel a dog may get hurt (one dog is actually putting its teeth on the other, the fight goes on for more than a few seconds, etc), do not attempt to pull the dogs apart with your hands as you may be bitten. Instead, distract them with a loud noise, such as by banging two metal pans together. If this does not work, try dumping water on the dogs. You can also use the leashes to pull the dogs in opposite directions. Always have your own safety in mind, and never position yourself between two fighting dogs.
  10. **Before you bring your new dog home for the first time,** prepare a confined area separate from your other dogs. Give your new dog food and water bowls and feed him or her separately. For the first few days after you bring your new dog home, closely supervise all interactions between your new dog and resident dogs. Wait at least a couple of weeks before reintroducing toys and chews. When you do reintroduce them, be sure to double your previous supply so your new dog will have its own toys and chews
  11. **A note on puppies:** If your new dog is a puppy, introduce the puppy to a resident adult dog in the same way as above, and be careful to supervise interactions between the puppy and adult dog at home. Adult dogs will correct a puppy with a growl or quick snap if the puppy plays too roughly, and these corrections are completely normal. It is important to supervise interactions between the puppy and adult dog, however, in case the adult begins to behave aggressively towards the puppy.
  12. **Good luck!** If, for whatever reason, you are unable to achieve successful introductions between your new dog and resident dog, please contact an animal behavior expert.

**For more info, call our free Behavior Helpline (650/340-7022 x783 or, for Spanish, x786) or consider a low-cost consultation. To make a consultation appointment, call 650/340-7022 x667. The PHS/SPCA Behavior Department, like many shelter programs, is funded by donations.**