



Introducing a New Dog to a Resident Dog

Bringing a new dog into the home of an existing dog can be stressful and disruptive at times. Below are some helpful tips to aid in that transition. It is important to remember that we are not always best friends the first time we meet someone and your dogs may not be either. Utilizing a slow intro and implementing structure can help ensure that the dogs become best buddies. Also, check out our handout on dog body language for more helpful info.

Even if you had introduced your new dog to your resident dog at the shelter and all went well during that meeting, once everyone gets home, it will likely take all the dogs some time to find a new normal. Your resident dog may become a little more territorial, or your new dog, who doesn't know all the house rules yet, may be a rude house guest at first. Providing everyone a few weeks to a month of decompression time will help set everyone up for success.

- **Use baby gates to let the dogs see and smell each other without actual physical contact.** This can be a great tool, especially if the dogs are unsure of each other or there is a big size or age difference.
- **Never leave dogs alone unsupervised together** until you are certain they are getting along without issues. This includes back yard time. We recommend a month as a guide for close monitoring.
- If you have a house with multiple dogs we strongly recommend that you introduce dogs one at a time and have one person for each dog when they meet. A parallel walk is a great way to accomplish this. Monitoring a multiple dog household can be a challenge at first and we definitely recommend baby gates and NO RESOURCES available when they are together.
- **ALWAYS feed separately and monitor closely.** Neither dog should be allowed to approach the others bowl or get near the area of the other dog. Crate feeding is an excellent way to avoid squabbles over food. Pick up bowls when the dogs are finished eating. Free feeding is discouraged and can be a big source of squabbles.
- **High value items (bones, chew toys, puzzle feeders) should be picked up and only allowed in crates or separate rooms for a minimum of a month.** Most dogs do not like to share these types of items and will protect them from other dogs. If the existing dog has any "favorite" items, they should be picked up for this period as well.
- Toys should be closely monitored for the first few weeks. It is recommended to start with multiples of the SAME item. Example would be 5 tennis balls, or 5 rope toys. Dogs are less likely to fight over items of which there are multiples. Soft, squeaky toys tend to be the most highly coveted 😊
- **Any items that currently belong to the resident dog should remain theirs.** Their beds, blankets and such should not be given to the new dog. Even if you get the resident dog a nicer, new bed, they may still view the old bed as theirs.
- **We recommend that the dogs each drag a lightweight leash for at least the first few interactions.** That way if there needs to be any intervention, it is easy and safe.

- When introducing dogs of very different ages it is advisable to ensure the older dog has a safe place to retreat from the younger, and likely higher energy, dog. Watch for signs of stress in the older dog such as panting when not physically tired, hyper-salivation, and avoidance behaviors or hiding.
- **If both dogs are high energy players they may need you to give them breaks from play.** Even the best players can get over tired and become grumpy. If they are not taking breaks on their own and the play is high energy, we suggest letting them play for about 20-30 minutes and then give them time apart.
- **WALK! Go for as many walks as you can together in the first few weeks.** Even if they are short, it is a great bonding experience for them and there are many other things to sniff and see besides each other. Include the whole family if possible for more bonding.

Many times, the slow intros turn into the most wonderful dog relationships. Do not be afraid to go slow if needed. Enjoy the walks and the relationship building.

If, after trying these suggestions, you are still experiencing undesirable behaviors in your dog, SUBMIT QUESTIONS by clicking the link under Ask A Trainer on the Behavior and Training page of the Wayside Waifs website: www.waysidewaifs.org.

Written by the Wayside Waifs Canine Behavior Team
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