

Introducing Your Dog to a New Family Dog

Introduce your dog to a new family dog carefully and slowly. First impressions are important and if the dogs have a bad experience with each other, it may either take them longer to get along or permanently damage their relationship. If possible, allow the dogs to first meet outside your home such as in a room at WagVille, or in a park before bringing the new dog home. Dogs can be protective or possessive of their own home, toys, etc.

During the introduction period, until the dogs are reliably getting along, they should be supervised at all times and housed separately when they are not being supervised. Alternate which dog is allowed the run of the house or yard when alone and which is confined in a part of it, such as an extra bedroom.

At first, you may not want to allow the dogs to have free access to each other when you are supervising them. Separate them with a baby gate or put one or both dogs in their own crate so they can see each other. If you only use one crate, you can rotate who is in the crate at each session. As they watch or interact with each other through the barrier, talk to them quietly, give both treats and encourage calm, relaxed behavior. Don't allow the dogs to become overly excited or aroused. You can also take the dogs for a walk on leash, keeping a distance between them.

Watch each dog's behavior carefully. Look for any tenseness, fearfulness, or threatening or aggressive behavior. If you observe any, continue to keep the dogs separated and do not allow them together until you see only calm, relaxed behaviors while they are on either side of the barrier. You may need to keep them apart this way for only several hours, or possibly several days. If you aren't sure how to recognize fearful, threatening or aggressive behavior in your dogs, talk to someone at WagVille about dog body language.

Once the dogs are comfortable in each others' presence, allow them to come together with both on leashes. It is very important that you either keep the leashes loose or just allow the dogs to drag them. If you are tugging on the leashes to keep the dogs away from one another this can cause fear which may trigger aggressive behavior. If either dog becomes uneasy or unmanageable, calmly end the session and next time have them together for a shorter time period or keep more distance between them. Keep a squirt bottle with water, or a can full of coins at hand to interrupt overly exuberant or aggressive behavior. If a fight seems about to occur or does, separate the dogs and contact an experienced certified applied or veterinary behaviorist or other behavior consultant.

Dogs vary as to how quickly they move through the introduction phase. Some dogs may be immediate buddies. It may take them a while to bond. Some dogs get along well at first but develop problems later on, or vice versa. In rare cases, the dogs may never get along and finding one of the dogs another home maybe the best thing to do.

If you have more than one resident dog to introduce to your new dog, introduce each dog separately to the new dog and gradually work up to having all the dogs together.

Once the dogs are comfortable with each other while you are supervising them you can gradually work up to longer times that you leave them alone together.

Make sure that you do not try to dictate which dog will be the leader among your dogs, based on how long the dog has lived with you, which one is oldest or largest or that one dog is your favorite. This may cause instability in their relationships and could lead to fighting problems among the dogs.