

Maximizing the potential for a great relationship between your current dog and your new dog is a two-step process. First, the actual introduction has to happen. Second, you will need to have a plan to manage the first few weeks of the new dog in your home.

How should I introduce my current dog to my new dog?

- **Leave your current dog at home** when you pick up your new dog. It's best to avoid confined spaces (like a car) with two dogs that are just getting to know each other.
- **Take safety precautions.** Have a noisemaker on hand (banging baking sheets can work well) or Spray Shield (a citronella spray) to interrupt in case the dogs start fighting and you cannot separate them with the leashes. Do not use mace or pepper spray as it may increase aggression and do not attempt to break up a fight using your hands or body.
- **Introduce your dogs on neutral territory**, like a nearby park or in a friend's yard. Have two people, one to handle each dog, while keeping the dogs on leashes. To minimize tension, keep the dogs' leashes loose so that they're not feeling pressure on their throats.
- **Make the introduction brief and positive.** As the dogs sniff and get acquainted, encourage them in a happy tone of voice. After a few seconds of sniffing, lead the dogs apart and provide a brief break. Repeat the short introductions until both dogs are relaxed.
- **Parallel walking.** You can also walk the dogs in the same direction (parallel) and gradually close the distance between the dogs if they are showing friendly body language.
- **Closely observe the dogs' body language.** The dogs should be loose and wiggly, with open and relaxed mouths. If you see stiff bodies, teeth-baring, growls or prolonged staring, quickly lead the dogs apart to give them more distance from each other and wait for the arousal to decrease before attempting to re-introduce them.
- **Drop the leashes.** If the dogs are both showing happy body language, drop the leashes and let them drag on the ground. Continue to closely observe both dogs.

How should I manage the initial transition weeks to set them up for long-term success? (Note: Once the dogs have settled into a happy relationship, you can gradually relax these recommendations).

- **Set up long-term confinement areas for each dog.** Keep the dogs separated whenever you're away or can't supervise their interactions.
- **Give each dog his own water and food bowls, bed and toys in his confinement area.** For the first few weeks, only give the dogs toys/chews when they're separated in their confinement areas. Feed the dogs in their separate confinement areas.
- **Spend time individually with each dog.** Give each of them training time with you and playtime outside your home. Spend quiet time alone with each dog to develop or maintain your bond.
- **Short but sweet interactions with each other.** Keep the dogs' playtime and interactions brief to avoid overstimulation and overarousal, which can lead to fighting.
- **You're the referee.** When the dogs are interacting, interrupt any time that one or both dogs are not having fun with a phrase like "Too bad," and then quickly separate them for several minutes. If you think maybe one of them is not having fun, you can allow the unhappy/overwhelmed dog the choice to reengage; if he comes back for more play, it is likely that he was actually having a good time. If your dogs seem to react poorly to each other often, don't hesitate to contact a professional who can help you, such as a Certified Applied Animal Behaviorist (CAAB), a board-certified veterinary behaviorist (Dip ACVB) or a Certified Professional Dog Trainer (CPDT) who's experienced in treating problems between dogs.
- **Be patient.** Bringing a new dog home requires that everyone make some adjustments, especially your current pets. It will take time for your dogs to build a comfortable relationship.