



Introducing a New Dog to a Resident Dog

A word before starting: when introducing dogs to one another, *first impressions matter*. How the dogs interact in their first few encounters can set the tone for their entire relationship, so care must be taken to set everyone up for success. Throwing them together in the back yard and letting them “work it out” can lead to heartbreak (if the integration fails) and occasionally serious injury. Follow these steps to help both dogs get to know each other slowly and carefully.

1. Have the dogs meet on-leash on neutral territory first: this can be a neighbor’s yard, a training center, tennis court, etc. Have both dogs on-leash. Allow them to look at and sniff one another through a barrier, such as a fence, for up to 30 minutes. By then, the novelty of seeing a new dog has worn off, paving the way for a more positive introduction. Another option is to take the dogs for a walk together, keeping ten feet between them so that they cannot greet one another or stare. The idea is simply to acclimate them to each other’s presence without causing tension.
2. Next, have the dogs meet off-leash on neutral territory. Avoid problem areas like gates, doorways or closely confined space: the more room they have to move, the less tension there will be. Wait 2 minutes while they sniff each other, then call them away and move around. If they start to play and it seems to be going well, let them play for a few minutes and then end the session. We want each initial interaction to end on a good note!
3. Finally, have the dogs meet at home: first in the yard, then inside the house. Before the in-house introduction, take the resident dog out to the yard, then bring new dog inside (bringing the new dog inside to meet resident dog can create a negative reaction). Keep each interaction short and pleasant: if signs of tension arise, separate the dogs immediately and try again later. Remember that the introduction will set the tone for their relationship, so it’s important to set everyone up for success!
4. Keep the dogs separate while you are away, either in separate rooms or crates. This is both to prevent injurious fights and the development of inappropriate behavior in your new dog (such as chewing and housesoiling).
5. While the dogs can settle minor disputes with each other (such as growling the other off of a toy or their own food bowl), they aren’t allowed to limit each other’s access to you, your family and common areas of the home. In many multi-dog households, contrary to popular belief, there is neither a “dominant” nor a “submissive” dog, but individuals whose roles change depending on the



context involved (ex: a dog that claims access to a favorite toy may let another dog claim the couch). **Instead of “supporting the dominance” of any one dog, establish yourself as a benevolent leader, rewarding polite behavior and managing the environment to prevent conflicts from developing.**

6. For more information, see the booklet *“Feeling Outnumbered? How to Manage and Enjoy Your Multi-Dog Household”* by Karen London, Ph.D. and Patricia McConnell, Ph.D., available for purchase at the AHS Training School.