



Dog to Dog Introductions in Home

A proper introduction between pets can help your pets' relationship get off to a good start. Remember to go slowly, stay calm and remain patient. A good frame of perspective would be to consider how would you feel if one of your household members brought home another person and announced that he/she would be living with you. It would be generally upsetting to your routines, your personal space and your habits. The same holds true for our pets.

One goal to keep in mind is to try to convince your current pet that life really is better with the addition of the new animal.

Homes with more than one dog

Your current dog and the dog you are adopting will have already met at the shelter so you should have an idea of how they will interact with one another. However, you must remember that all kinds of things can happen when the adopted dog gets on the resident dog's territory. Even if they appear to adore each other, you should monitor the situation carefully.

When you first bring the new dog home. Have the animals meet outdoors on neutral territory, such as a neighborhood park. Take the animals for a walk. After the walk, introduce the new dog to the house but keep him leashed. When you feel comfortable, take his leash off but supervise both dogs closely. In the beginning, if no one can be home to watch the dogs, you should separate them until you are sure that they are getting along well.

Feed them in different places to alleviate resource guarding. Even dogs who get along beautifully do not often want to share their food. Do not leave food down 24 hours per day.

Establishing hierarchy. Dogs are social creatures who are designed to live within the group called a dominance hierarchy. This dominance hierarchy normally serves to maintain order, reduce conflict and promote cooperation among group members. It is very difficult for any social group to be successful with prolonged conflict; generally, dogs within a household will generally work their hierarchal issues out among themselves.

It is normal for dogs to communicate via snarling, growling, snapping and teeth baring. Don't be alarmed if there is some of this as the dogs establish the rules of their hierarchy.

You cannot choose which dog you want to be dominant. The dogs will establish this among themselves, and any attempt to interfere may result in increased conflict. Where each dog ranks in the dominance hierarchy is determined by the outcomes of interactions between the dogs themselves. Individual personality, as well as breed characteristics, are important factors. The dog that demands to be fed first, petted first and through the door first is usually the dominant dog. Remember that the rankings may be different in different contexts (one dog may control food, while another may control resting places) and they may change over time. Don't interrupt or interfere with the dominant dog's ability to control the preferred items (food, toys, beds, attention) in his environment by giving preferential treatment to the subordinate dog(s). Punishing either dog will not solve the problem and can actually make the problem worse.

Sue Sternberg, in her book Successful Dog Adoptions, writes, "There is something to be said for having one dog on which to shower all your love, praise, devotion, and attention. There is equally as much to be said for having two dogs to complete your family. There is nothing easy about having two dogs, let alone *easier*. Some people think two dogs will keep each other company and entertain each other when the owners are not around, but the truth is that having more than one is usually more work. With many added benefits. But usually more work as well. Almost no dog will teach another his good habits; dogs teach each other their less-than-pleasant habits. The quiet dog rarely teaches another dog to be quiet, but the barking dog readily encourages his friends to bark with him."

She continues by saying, "But having two can add to the joy and fun of their lives and our own lives. Life is less lonely with a dog, and even less lonely with two dogs. That goes for your dog(s), too — life is less lonely for them. Dogs don't necessarily play together while you are away at work — in fact you usually have two dogs pining away for you. But when you do come home, two dogs make for an even bigger and better homecoming event. And whether or not dogs play together during the long hours you leave them for during your work schedule doesn't mean they aren't keeping each other good company."

The book from which these quotes are taken, Successful Dog Adoptions (Howell Book House, 2003), contains a 20-page chapter on adding another dog to your home and is well worth reading.

What should I do to prepare my current dog for the arrival of a second dog?

Here are two suggestions:

- If you typically leave food out 24 hours a day for your dog, you should plan on stopping this and putting both dogs on a regular feeding schedule.
- If you leave toys or rawhide out for your dog, plan to add new ones so that there are plenty for each dog. Be forewarned, however, that it's common for dogs to always want whatever toy the other dog has.