



Dog-Dog Introductions

Congratulations! You're bringing home a new dog to join your other four legged friend(s) with you. Follow the protocol below for the best chances at a successful introduction. Keep in mind that there is no set or predetermined amount of time that the introduction process should take place. Time needed to introduce your dogs together will depend on them and should never be rushed. Patience is key and will be rewarded.

Your dogs should first meet in a neutral area. If you're adopting or fostering from a shelter this can be done at the shelter facility in a play yard or a walk. If you've already brought your new dog home you can go for a walk with both dogs, then move to a yard or other green space so your dogs can spend some time together before moving inside.

Once at home and inside, your new dog should be contained in a room or area of the house that they will have to themselves for the first few days/weeks (depending on the dog). Their crate, food, water, and toys (including enrichment) should be in this space ("base camp"), and the resident dog should not be able to see the new dog in this space. Having free reign over a new home is overwhelming to your new dog and may cause anxiety, not to mention potential issues with resident pets.

Allow your new dog time outside their "base camp" each day to explore the house, one or two new rooms at a time. During this time, the resident dog should be in another area such as outside, on a walk, or in the new dog's base camp space.

Decompression is very important for any new dog (usually around two weeks, though it may be much shorter or much longer). This means stimulation should be kept to a minimum, as the dog is already overstimulated from all the sights, sounds, and smells of a new home, so any extra stimulation can push them over their threshold. Physical exercise should be short and sweet (no long walks or walks in busy areas—if you have a yard, this should suffice for now), and they should not be exposed to any people or pets who do not live in the home at this time (no meeting the neighbors or family or friend's pets or dog parks yet!). Instead, focus on enrichment in their base camp (Kongs, Lickimats, snuffle mats, food puzzles, even short basic training sessions).

Keep interactions between the new dog and resident dog short and supervised during decompression, gradually increasing the time they spend together. For many people, this looks like taking the dogs for a walk together (if they are not frustrated by the leashes) or having play time together in the yard if you have one. Just pick an activity that all the pets enjoy doing so that they will form positive associations with each other! If any of the pets have ever guarded toys or food, do not allow access to any toys or food. Inside a house is not a great place for dogs to **create** new positive associations with each other. Allow them to get to know each other outside in an open area where they have more space to communicate and feel comfortable with each other. You can start to allow them to spend

some together inside after a few days—not for too long at first, and choose the most open areas—and gradually increase the amount of time over the course of a week or two. Never leave them loose alone if you are not present during this time.

Get your new dog on board with the daily household routine. Having a predictable daily schedule greatly reduces anxiety. This also means no free feeding! Not only does free feeding cause obesity, but feeding your pet on a schedule helps to establish a predictable routine for them. We also recommend using a puzzle-type enrichment feeder so that they will be able to engage their brains at mealtime, which also helps to reduce anxiety and many problem behaviors. Feed your new dog separately from your resident dog (new dog should be in their base camp anyways). It is a good idea to feed dogs in their crate too so that they may form positive associations with their crate.

Most people will recognize more overt signals of tension such as growling, snarling, or lunging. However, we want to avoid the dogs getting to this point as, ideally, all interactions are managed and moved at a slow enough pace that the stress signals do not occur. Watch each dog's body language closely for earlier, more subtle signs of tension and disagreement, so that you can redirect the dogs calmly and casually before the tension escalates any further.

- Staring/extended eye contact
- Whale eye (looking out of the side of their eyes)
- Stiffness/tension in any part of the body or face
- Tail stops wagging or lowers suddenly
- Ears going back
- Paw lifting

At the same time as redirecting signs of tension, always reward any “calming” signals (signals meant to communicate peace and reduce tension) directed toward each other. Common calming signals include:

- Yawning
- Shaking off (as when they're wet)
- Looking or walking away from the trigger
- Sniffing the ground
- Sitting/lying down (especially with a big sigh)
- Play bowing

Never use punishment or scold dogs—in general!—but especially when they are getting to know each other. They may associate this sudden anger from you (that's what they see punishment as) with the other dog. Yelling only increases their stress levels and may make them more upset at each other as well (they often think you must be yelling at the other dog and they should help!).

- If they are doing something you don't like, calmly redirect them, or separate them.
- If they begin fighting, remain as calm as possible (yelling may just make the fighting more intense) separate them as quickly as you can (without putting your hands near their faces!). Keep leashes on them and let them drag the floor until you are comfortable and confident that you won't need to separate them, to avoid having to reach near their faces and accidentally getting bitten.

Project calm and confident energy at all times (even if you *aren't*)! You are their trusted person and they look up to you, and they can read our body language and smell our emotions on a molecular level, so if you are worried, they will be too. On the other hand, if

they sense you are calm and relaxed, they are more likely to be as well. If you are easily anxious and even if you tense up a little bit, they can feel that, so try mindful breathing or talking calmly out loud to decrease the tension in the air.

DOGGIE LANGUAGE

starring Boogie the Boston Terrier



ALERT



SUSPICIOUS



ANXIOUS



THREATENED



ANGRY



"PEACE!"
look away/head turn



STRESSED
yawn



STRESSED
nose lick



"PEACE!"
sniff ground



"RESPECT!"
turn & walk away



"NEED SPACE"
whale eye



STALKING



STRESSED
scratching



STRESS RELEASE
shake off



RELAXED
soft ears, blinky eyes



"RESPECT!"
offer his back



FRIENDLY & POLITE
curved body



FRIENDLY



"PRETTY PLEASE"
round puppy face



"I'M YOUR LOVEBUG"
belly-rub pose



"HELLO I LOVE YOU!"
greeting stretch



"I'M FRIENDLY!"
play bow



"READY!"
prey bow



"YOU WILL FEED ME"



CURIOUS
head tilt



HAPPY
(or hot)



OVERJOYED
wiggly



"MMMM...."



"I LOVE YOU,
DON'T STOP"

© 2011 Lili Chin www.doggiedrawings.net

Lili

4101 Eisenhower Ave., Alexandria, VA 22304 | 703.746.4774

Behavior@AlexandriaAnimals.org



Body Language of Fear in Dogs



Slight Cowering



Major Cowering

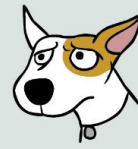
More Subtle Signs of Fear & Anxiety



Licking Lips
when no food nearby



Panting
when not hot or thirsty



Brows Furrowed, Ears to Side



Moving in Slow Motion
walking slow on floor



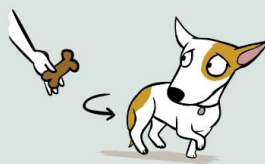
Acting Sleepy or Yawning
when they shouldn't be tired



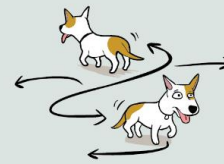
Hypervigilant
looking in many directions



Suddenly Won't Eat
but was hungry earlier



Moving Away



Pacing



Home of Low Stress Handling®
CattleDog Publishing®
A PART OF THE VIN FAMILY

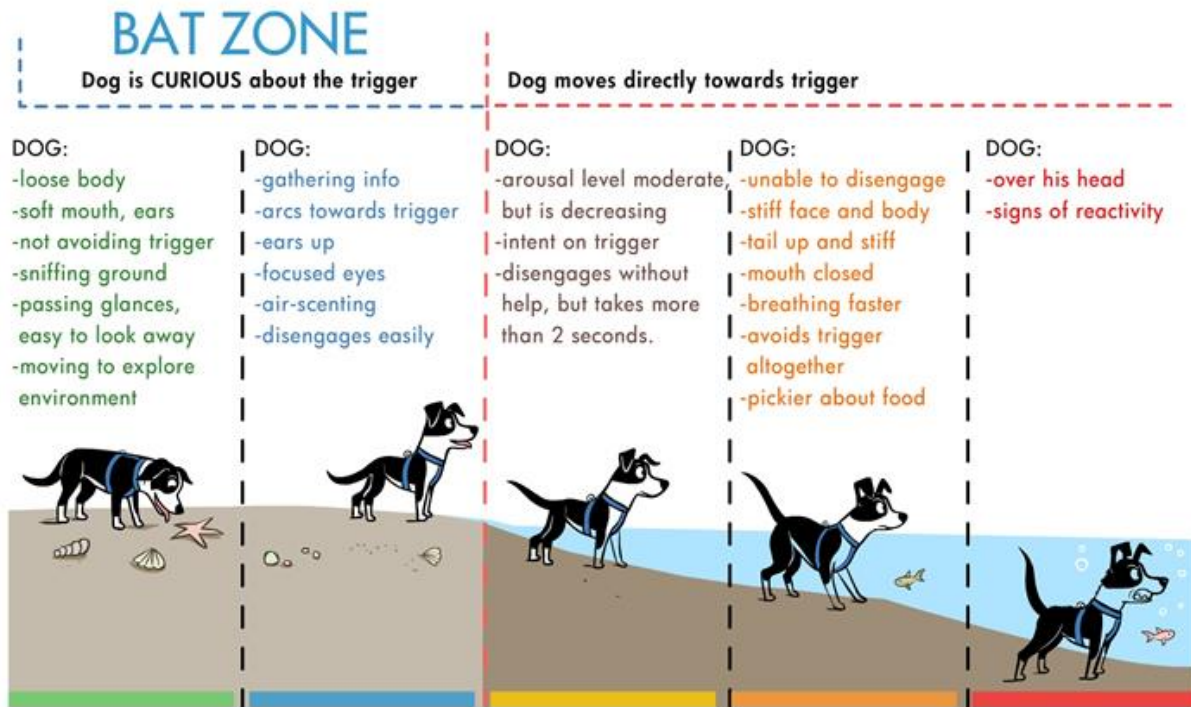


© Veterinary Information Network Inc.

STRESS & SUPPORT SCALE

Stay On The Beach!

Dog's stress level is analogous to rising water level



© 2014 Grisha Stewart, EmpoweredAnimals.com, all rights reserved