

TIPS FOR ADOPTERS:

Introducing A New Dog to Your Pack



BEFORE THE FIRST MEETING

Before introducing your new puppy/dog, take away all items your dog might feel protective of. Food dishes, favorite toys, even nests or bedding may cause your dog to react aggressively to the presence of another, even if he hasn't shown these behaviors in the past. Clean up any untidiness or clutter, as the dogs may feel pushed together if their space is confined.

NEUTRAL GROUND

To help prevent the resident dog from getting territorial, choose an open area for the initial meeting, like your front yard. This provides a neutral atmosphere with other things going on to distract the dogs, and they will be able to separate if they want to. Be sure there is another person to handle one of the dogs.

For Puppies: Keep their leashes loose, or let them go, so they won't feel restrained. After the obligatory sniffing, a puppy will probably become submissive to a grown dog by exposing his belly. If your resident dog is used to others, he may want to play with the puppy, or he may just be more interested in other things.

For Adult Dogs: Two grown dogs may go through an extensive ritual of posturing, sniffing, playing or even urinating. After this, one or both may simply choose to pay no attention to the other, but don't worry if they growl a little or try to dominate each other. Let them establish their rapport with as little interference from you as possible. Only intervene if the dogs begin to fight, or tension is obviously mounting. *Please review the **Separating Fighting Dogs** section below.* Tension behaviors include hackle-raising (the hair on the back of their necks standing on end), baring their teeth, deep growling, nipping or snapping. If you witness any of these behaviors, separate the dogs before a fight begins by calling them or gently prodding them apart. **Do not pull on the leash** as this may instigate the fight. Use treats to gain their attention and move them apart.

This initial meeting should be brief. Afterwards, if your new dog is fully vaccinated, take both dogs on a short walk together. If you have several dogs, introduce each separately before allowing them to meet together.

INTRODUCING YOUR HOME

Complete your front yard intro, and short walk (if applicable), then take your resident dog inside. We recommend placing them in a bedroom with a toy to play with while you take your new foster to the backyard. With his leash still attached, but dragging, let your foster dog roam in the backyard. If your dogs got along well in the front yard, let them meet in the backyard. After a while, the dogs will be ready to come inside.

TIPS FOR ADOPTERS:

Introducing A New Dog to Your Pack



Your first dog should come inside and be placed back in the bedroom with a toy. Let the new dog or puppy inside and allow them to explore the house room by room with the leash on. Take them back outside and let your resident dog out of the bedroom, let him smell where the other dog has been. Bring your new dog back inside and again let him roam with his leash on. If the first dog seems comfortable and accepting.

Please follow the guidelines found in our [*Tips to Help Decompress Your New Foster*](#) document. Short interactions between all dogs should be limited the first three days and must always be supervised.

For the first one to two weeks, always watch the interactions between the dogs. Do not leave them alone together until you are sure they are comfortable with each other. Remember your first dog has established habits, so continue to take them on walks, feed meals, and play with them at the usual times. This will help your first dog see that the new one is not a disruption to his normal day.

ALWAYS FEED YOUR NEW DOG SEPARATE FROM YOUR RESIDENT DOG. We recommend feeding your foster in their crate. This goes for treats and chew toys as well.

It is important during this interim period to watch the dogs in circumstances that might antagonize one or both. Anything that may excite the dogs could set them off – family members returning home, walks, visitors, meals, and play.

While it is great if the dogs become fond of one another, don't forget to spend time with each of them, apart from the other. You want their primary bond to be with you, not the other dog, so get in some quality one-on-one time.

WHAT HAPPENS IF MY DOGS DON'T GET ALONG AT FIRST MEETING?

Do not be alarmed if the meeting doesn't go well the first try. Please don't give up. Follow the instructions from our [*Tips to Help Decompress Your New Foster*](#). This is applicable to newly adopted dogs as well. Remember decompression is key for new dogs. Especially for new foster dogs. They have been stuck in a loud scary shelter, some have been on a long transport; they're tired and confused. Keep the dogs separate until the next day, and then try reintroducing, start from the beginning. While you are continuing your dog's intro work, you can use the crate and rotate method to keep them safe and separate.

CRATE and ROTATE is recommended for dogs that need a little more time to adjust to each other. This is periodic crating throughout the day for dogs who cannot be let loose together. Crate and rotate may also include the use of baby gates or bedrooms to separate parts of the house. *Please Note: that wire crates are not escape proof and need to be reinforced with zip ties as well as set behind a baby gate or other barrier to prevent access from the other dog(s).* They need a minimum of two solid barriers

TIPS FOR ADOPTERS:

Introducing A New Dog to Your Pack



between them. You want the dogs to be used to seeing/smelling/hearing each other, but you don't want to think of the other dog as a non-reactive fixture. With one dog secure in a crate, you can walk the other dog by on a leash.

Crate and Rotate doesn't mean they are only in their crate or that is the only time they see each other; it just means if you aren't actively working on their intros, they don't have access to each other. Exercise them as much as you can, cuddle with them, spend as much time as you can with them, so they don't get lonely. It's recommended to give a dog frozen Kong treats or other stimulating goodies that are safe. Please review our crate training tips in our [*Tips to Help Decompress Your New Foster*](#).

Crate and Rotate routine:

- Rotate dogs every 3-4 hours
- During the 3-4 hours one dog is out; they are exercised, provide a little obedience training, give them a chance to relax and get affection
- Then alternate dogs
- If you have fully vaccinated dogs and take them for "away from home" adventures; your foster can roam the house (supervised with another family member only)
- At night you can alternate who sleeps in their crate and who sleeps in your bedroom
- It is ok to keep the resident dog loose in a separate bedroom or part of the house while your foster dog is crated, so long as they have no access to each other.

A FEW DON'TS:

- **DON'T** introduce a puppy to a grown dog by holding him in your arms. The puppy could feel restrained and vulnerable. The best way is to let the puppy greet the dog on his terms, on the ground. You can help by providing a space between your feet for the puppy to run to if he feels it is all a little too much to handle.
- **DON'T** let a grown dog walk over, knock down, or bully the puppy.
- **DON'T** confine dogs together in a crate, vehicle, or small room until they are fully at ease with each other.
- **DON'T EVER** let a fight between two dogs go on. This will simply lead to a very bad relationship down the line. You will need to step in and break up the dogs whether from a fight or if one dog is aggressively bullying the other. It is always best to stop a battle, so the dogs do not think belligerent behavior is okay.

TIPS FOR ADOPTERS:

Introducing A New Dog to Your Pack



SEPARATING FIGHTING DOGS

This can be a scary prospect and it isn't unusual for owners to be bitten, even by their own dog, while trying to separate fighting animals. Here are a few tips to help you separate the dogs while minimizing the chances of being bitten:

- Try screaming; not at the dogs directly, but simply letting out a "howl" – this can work by distracting the dogs from the fight.
- If the dogs are on leads, pull them apart with these, being careful not to cause further injury as some dogs will react to a tightening leash by biting down harder (It is also for this reason that you should avoid beating the dogs with a stick or weapon).
- If the dogs are off-leash, grab one of them from behind and lift him into the air. The feeling of being up off the ground can distract the dog from the fight. Use caution—this tactic can put you in an exposed position, so use caution.
- Try grabbing the provoker by the tail, ear, or testicles. Squeeze hard enough to persuade the dog to turn his attention toward you. Be ready to move out of the way in case the dog turns to bite.
- Using a water hose, an air horn, or one of many sprays available at pet supply stores may also be effective.
- When one dog has clamped down on the other, you might have to resort to prying the dog's jaws apart. Use a stick if possible and your hands as a last resort. Another choice is to use your fingers to cut off the dog's air by placing pressure against his windpipe.

Always use these tactics with caution for yourself and others in the area. If possible, two people working together are better than one alone.

Source: Adapted from the ASPCA