



Introducing a New Dog to Your Household



Congratulations on adopting a new member of your family! Adding a new dog to your household is exciting for you, but for an existing pet, this can be a stressful time. It's like getting a roommate that you didn't know about ahead of time. With a little effort and patience, introducing your new dog can be stress-free and successful!

Initial Steps for Introducing Any Animal

Make sure your new dog has a space to call its own. Location is important; a quiet area away from where the other animals' things are is ideal, as this will help decrease territorial issues. This space should include:

- An appropriately sized kennel
- A couple of dog toys
- Food and water bowls

Allow your other pets to “meet” through a closed door at first.

- This lets them smell each other while still allowing the opportunity for either one to move away from the site of interaction without risk of being followed

Prior to introducing everyone, allow the newest member to check out the house and yard while the other animals aren't around (closed in a room, outside, kenneled, etc). This gives them a chance to learn the layout of their surroundings without feeling threatened.

Introduction to Your Cat(s)

Be sure to have a space for your cats where they can go without the dog.

This area should include:

- Litter box(es)
- Food and water dishes
- Cat toys
- Sleeping areas
- Places to hide
- Things to climb on

Cats can be easily stressed by changes in their lives, so allowing an area where they can “get away” can keep them more relaxed. Keeping a baby gate in the doorway, for instance, allows a cat to get into its room without the dog being able to follow.

Don't hold or restrain your cat when introducing them to a dog. Even a cat who would normally never bite or scratch may do so if they feel nervous or panicked at the situation.

Prior to letting them meet, take the dog for a long walk or have an intense play session

- Burning energy will help keep your dog calmer and make an easier introduction

Introduction may take a few minutes, a few hours, or a few days. During this time, keep your dog on leash.

- This allows them to interact freely, but you can gain control quickly should the dog decide to chase
- The more casual the introduction, the less anxiety there will be and the calmer you stay, the less tension and excitement will be felt by your pets

You can further reward good behavior by offering treats when the dog is behaving well with the cat nearby.

- Ask them to sit, lay down, or any known behaviors and give a treat for following your request
- Do NOT give treats when a dog is staring at, pulling towards, or is otherwise fixated on the cat as this will reinforce the unwanted behavior

This is the time when you are letting your new dog know what your expectations are around your cat(s).

- Don't allow a behavior now, just because the dog is new, that you aren't going to consider ok later

If you aren't comfortable with the idea of letting the animals run loose together after one introduction, separate them (the dog can go back to its kennel or room), and try again later.

- You can also tether the dog to you while you do things around the house, allowing the cat to move freely while still being able to correct the dog for inappropriate interaction

Introduction to Your Other Dog(s)

If you have multiple dogs currently living in your household, it is recommended that you introduce the dogs one at a time.

- Not only is it easier for you to control the situation, but it can be less overwhelming for a new dog to meet one dog as compared to meeting multiple at once
- It can also be beneficial to introduce your new dog to your calmest dog first, as it will likely be an easier introduction

Before allowing the dogs to meet face to face, take them, individually, for a long walk or vigorous play session to decrease energy

- This will allow them to be more relaxed while meeting and have a more successful interaction

Because dogs can be territorial of their house, take the dogs into the yard, a park, or other neutral ground to first meet.

- Keep both dogs on leash, with a confident handler **each** controlling one
- Walk around the area together, maintaining sufficient distance that the dogs are unable to come in contact
- After a few minutes, allow them to get closer, and continue walking
- Do not encourage them to approach face-to-face as this can lead to a fight
- Once you have spent several minutes walking together, and you feel comfortable with the dogs' behavior, have one handler drop the leash (if in an area where a loose dog is safe) while the other one maintains control—this allows you to have some control should an issue arise
- After several minutes, assuming all is going well, the leash can be dropped for the second dog as well.

**If a fight should occur, DO NOT reach in between the dogs - this is why leaving leashes on is recommended. Should you be unable to gain control of the leashes, use loud noises, throw water, or whatever is available to gain the attention of the dogs so you can safely get ahold of the leash.

Always allow the dogs the opportunity to be alone if they choose. Even if the introduction went well, personal space and time to relax is important to decrease stress.

It can take several hours, days, or weeks for everyone to become comfortable with each other. Introductions can be repeated as many times as necessary for everyone to feel comfortable. Continue to watch for issues to arise, especially during feeding time or when treats are given out. Being proactive and attentive will help ease the transition and minimize potential problems.

