



# DOG-DOG INTRODUCTIONS

## SETTING THE STAGE FOR A LIFELONG FRIENDSHIP



**B**ringing a new dog into your family can be both exciting and overwhelming. If you already have a dog at home, introducing a new friend can take time and patience. A good first introduction can help set the stage for a lifelong friendship between your dogs. Here are a few suggestions to help create a successful first meeting:

**1. INTRODUCE AT A NEUTRAL LOCATION:** Have the first meeting be in a place that is unfamiliar to both dogs, such as a park or a friend's backyard. If you're adopting from the shelter, you can bring your dog with you to see how they get along before adopting.

**2. GO FOR A WALK:** Going for a walk together can be a great way to help dogs share a space while doing an activity that they like. This can help increase positive feelings for each other and keep the first meeting fun.

**3. TAKE YOUR TIME AND DON'T FORCE INTERACTION:** During the introduction, it's important for all the people to remain relaxed and positive. Talk to the dogs in a happy tone and keep the leashes loose. Each dog should be on leash with his own handler. Allow both dogs to become comfortable with the presence of the other before letting them meet. This can be done by providing distance and rewarding calm behavior. When both dogs seem comfortable, you can move closer together.

**4. KEEP IT SHORT AND SWEET:** When bringing the dogs closer, have the handlers move in a circle versus approaching head on. This is the polite way for dogs to meet. Let the dogs sniff each other for 3 to 5 seconds moving with them as they circle, then calmly move them away. If all is going well, allow the dogs to meet again giving them more time to communicate with one another.

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**



# DOG-DOG INTRODUCTIONS

## SETTING THE STAGE FOR A LIFELONG FRIENDSHIP

**5. LET THE DOGS DECIDE:** During introductions, it's important to pay attention to how both dogs are behaving. Dogs can offer clues to how they're feeling through changes in behavior and body postures. How the dogs are acting will dictate how you should proceed:

**PLAYFUL:** Play behavior can include relaxed wiggly bodies and play bows (lowering of the front end while keeping the rump in the air). This can be an encouraging sign. If both dogs seem happy, let them test out playing together by dropping their leashes (if in a secure area). Interrupt the play every few minutes to keep it mellow and not too overwhelming for either dog.

**UNSURE:** A dog who is unsure will avoid meeting. He may also have a tense body and slow movements. Do not force this dog to interact. Move the other dog away temporarily and allow the unsure dog to build its confidence by offering reward and praise for allowing the other dog to again approach. Keep the meetings short until you see the other dog being more relaxed.

**OVERWHELMED:** Some dogs rush to greet other dogs. They may try to climb on or push around the other dog. This can be quite overwhelming for the other dog. Separate the dogs and give the rushee time to calm his behavior. This dog may greet the other dog only when he can show more polite greeting behavior. Keep the greetings short until both dogs show signs of being comfortable.

**6. BE PREPARED:** It's common for two dogs to have a disagreement when they first meet. It's their way of setting boundaries with each other. A growl is normal communication and should not be corrected. However, it's best not to let the intensity level rise too high as this can often lead to miscommunications and a fight.

If at any point things begin to get out of hand and you feel that a dog may get hurt, move the dogs apart. If you need to, you can use a loud noise to distract the dogs and give you a chance to separate them. Avoid yelling, however, as this can increase the intensity of the fight and never put yourself between two fighting dogs, as this can result in serious injury.

**7. LIFE AT HOME:** When bringing your new dog home for the first time, make sure that every dog has its own space. This will allow for comfortable down times where the dogs can rest and adjust to the new environment. Pick up all toys, chews and other objects that might cause the dogs to get possessive. These objects can be slowly returned as time goes by, starting with the least interesting.

Supervise all the dogs' interactions for at least the first three days. During times together, give breaks so that neither dog becomes overwhelmed with the situation.

**GOOD LUCK AND REMEMBER:** Go slow, be patient and stay relaxed and happy to help everyone enjoy the family member.