



Introducing Your Old Dog to a New Dog

Thinking about bringing another dog into the family? It's important to realize that this is a huge change for an older dog—and unless you go about it the right way, it could create a lot of stress.

Here are a few ways you can help make the process of introducing your older dog to a new dog less stressful:

- **Choose a neutral location for introductions.** By choosing a location that is on neutral ground—for instance, a park or an unfamiliar yard— your older dog is less likely to view the new dog as an invader of his territory. With each dog on a leash (you'll need to get the help of another person for this), let them greet and sniff one another, but only for a short amount of time. Then, give each dog a simple command, such as "sit" or "stay." Be sure to give them each a treat when they obey. If all goes well up to this point, take the dogs for a walk, allowing them to sniff and investigate each other from time to time.
- **Use positive reinforcement.** When you talk to each of the dogs, use a happy, friendly tone of voice. Never talk to them in a way that is threatening. Reward good behavior with treats and/or compliments of "good dog!"
- **Monitor their body language.** The "play-bow" is one sign that will tell you things are going well between your two dogs. This invitation to play is characterized by one dog crouching with its front legs on the ground and its backside in the air. Body language that indicates an aggressive response includes hair standing up on the back, bared teeth, deep growls, and a prolonged stare. If you notice these kinds of responses, calmly stop the interaction. Using a positive tone of voice, distract each dog by getting them interested in something else.
- **On home turf.** If your outdoor introduction has been successful—in other words, there were no fearful or aggressive responses—it's time to take your dogs home. If you drove to your neutral location, you'll need to decide whether the dogs will be alright to travel in the same vehicle. Ideally, you should have separate crates for each, but if they're large dogs, this may not be possible.

When the new dog is a puppy

If the dog you're bringing home is just a puppy, you may want to do your introductions indoors. With the puppy in your lap and your older dog on a leash held by someone else, let the older dog sniff, lick, and explore the puppy. A couple of minutes is more than enough time for this initial introduction. Remove the puppy from the room, then lavish your older dog with attention and praise. On the second or third meeting, if all seems safe, allow the puppy onto the floor, and monitor that situation carefully for a few minutes. Remove the puppy from the room, and again, give your older dog praise and attention. Repeat this exercise at least twice daily until you're comfortable that the two will get along. It's not a good idea to leave your puppy alone with your older dog. There should always be someone there to supervise.

The importance of private time

Give your older dog some quiet time away from your new dog or puppy every once in awhile. He'll appreciate the break. And be sure to give him lots of individual attention so he'll know that he still holds a special place in your heart and hasn't been replaced.

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