



Multi-Dog Households



Steps for Introducing Your New Dog to a Resident Dog

Introducing a new dog into your home can be a tricky process. The slower the better! It's best to have many short and positive encounters for the first week and slowly work your way up to longer interactions.

You want your dogs to become friends, and that requires a little planning. Throwing them in a space together without a plan can cause a negative experience. That can cause one or both dogs to be fearful and may impact future introductions to other dogs. First impressions matter!

How to Introduce Two Dogs

Tips on how to introduce two dogs:

1. There is no reason the dogs need to meet the first day unless you can't keep them completely separated in your home. Your new adoptee has already had a very stressful day and might not want to make a new friend right now.
2. Once your adoptee has settled in, plan to meet on neutral ground; rather than an area that will cause either dog to feel territorial.
3. Keep both dogs on a loose leash. Any tension in the leash might communicate fear or anxiety. Walk the dogs side by side while maintaining a safe distance between them, and then have them cross paths so each dog can smell where the other has walked.
4. Watch their eyes. A hard stare by either dog could

mean trouble. Try to distract and redirect any staring lasting longer than 3 seconds.

5. Once both dogs seem calm, let them meet. As they approach each other, watch their body language while paying attention to each dog's entire body.
6. If the dogs stiffen and stare into each other's eyes, growl, or show teeth, they're probably not going to be fast friends. If they try to fight, separate them and allow them to cool down for 12 hours minimum before trying to reintroduce them.
7. If the dogs try to play by pawing or play bowing with their legs stretched out in front, allow them to sniff each other and give praise. You can continue to walk together, stopping occasionally to allow them to sniff and investigate each other.
8. Once the dogs seem comfortable together, you can try bringing them home together.
9. Before bringing a new dog into your home for the first time, make sure all your current dog's toys, bones, and food bowls are away, so neither dog attempts to guard them.



Things to Remember:

- Dogs don't need to or want to spend 24/7 together. Make time each day for dogs to spend alone time with you, for training, playing or, just hanging out together.
- At no point should the dogs be left together, unsupervised, in the first few weeks. Especially if you see playing that escalates in intensity or guarding behaviors. When this occurs, it is best to crate one or both dogs while you're gone.

Watch the Body Language

Careful observation of the dogs' body language during the first few seconds of an introduction can tell us a lot.

Here are some signs dogs give each other:

"I LIKE YOU. LET'S BE FRIENDS"

- loose/wiggly body
- ears back or relaxed
- panting/smiling
- tail loose/held down or level
- wiggly/bouncing/bowing
- lip licking



“LEAVE ME ALONE. I DON’T WANT TO PLAY”

- stiff/tense body
- ears very far forward
- closed/tight mouth
- tail arched up over back
- frozen/standing up on tip toes
- lip curling
- hard, direct staring

Mixed Signals

Some dog body language is difficult to read, and some signals may mean one thing to one dog and something entirely different to another.

Here are some examples:

Hackles: the hackles or hair along the dog’s spine may stand up for different reasons. For some dogs, it can be fear or anxiety or it can be excitement or arousal.

Tail wagging: Do not make assumptions about tail wagging. A wagging tail does not always mean a dog is happy. It can signal excitement or arousal. Dogs chasing prey often wag excitedly during the chase and capture. Some dogs wag while fighting with other dogs.

Vocalizations: Barking or whining when approaching another dog is not always a signal that the dog will behave aggressively. Dogs sometimes come on too strong and lack manners. They will bark incessantly at an approaching dog, but they could become friends quickly once they meet.

Humping: Humping can be embarrassing to witness, however, it can be a normal part of dog play. Humping can also signal the dog is unsure of the situation and what to do next. Most of the time, no intervention is needed. If the dog being humped is trying to get away and is unable, intervene and redirect.

Ways to Intervene when Tension is Rising:

- **STEP IN BETWEEN:** Casually step in between the dogs to break up their focus on one another.
- **USE YOUR VOICE:** Use a happy, high pitched voice to call one or both dogs away momentarily.
- **ADD TOYS:** A toy in the play space can allow mouthy dogs to keep their mouths focused on something else. This is only appropriate if neither dog guards toys.
- **MOVE TO A MORE INTERESTING ENVIRONMENT:** Having other things to sniff and focus on besides the other dog can slow play down and allow for natural breaks.
- **LET DOGS DRAG LEASHES:** Dragging leashes allows for easier intervention if necessary. If one dog is getting bullied, you can step on the bully’s leash. If the dog getting bullied comes back, let the play continue. If they don’t return, it’s probably a good idea to discontinue the play session and give both dogs a break.



918.894.9998

trainer@tulsaspc.org

www.tulsaspc.org

