

Homeless Pets Foundation



TECHNIQUES FOR INTRODUCING A NEW DOG TO A RESIDENT DOG

Choose a Neutral Location

Introduce the dogs in a neutral location so the resident dog is less likely to view the newcomer as a territorial intruder. Each dog should be handled by a separate person. With both dogs on a leash, take them to an area with which neither is familiar, such as a park or a neighbor's yard. If the resident dog is walked to a neighboring dog park, she may view that park as her territory, so choose another site that's unfamiliar to her. Bring the resident dog to the shelter and introduce the two dogs before adopting the new dog.

Use Positive Reinforcement

From the first meeting, the main objective is that both dogs expect good things to happen when they're in each other's presence. Let them sniff each other, which is normal canine greeting behavior. As they do, speak to them in a happy, friendly tone of voice and never use a threatening tone of voice. Don't allow them to investigate and sniff each other for a prolonged time, as this may escalate to an aggressive response. After a short time, get both dogs' attention, and give each dog a treat in return for obeying a simple command, such as "sit" or "stay." Take the dogs for a walk and let them sniff and investigate each other at intervals. Continue with the happy talk, food rewards and simple commands.

Be Aware of Body Postures

One body posture which indicates things are going well is a play-bow. One dog will crouch with her front legs on the ground and her hind end in the air. This is an invitation to play that usually elicits friendly behavior from the other dog. Watch carefully for body postures indicating aggressive response, including hair standing up on the other dog's back, teeth-baring, deep growls, a stiff legged gait or a prolonged stare. If these postures are observed, interrupt the interaction immediately by calmly and positively getting each dog interested in something else. For example, both handlers can call their dogs to them, have them sit or lie down and reward each with a treat. The dogs will become interested in the treats which will prevent the situation from escalating into aggression. Try letting the dogs interact again, but this time for a shorter time period and/or at a greater distance from each other.

Taking the Dogs Home

When the dogs seem to be tolerating each other's presence without fearful or aggressive responses, and the investigative greeting behaviors have tapered off, take both dogs home. Whether choosing to take them in the same or different vehicles, will depend on their size, how well they ride in the car, how trouble-free the initial introduction has been and how many dogs are involved. If there is more than one resident dog in the household, it may be best to introduce the resident dogs to the new dog one at a time. Two or more resident dogs may have a tendency to gang up on the newcomer.

Allow plenty of time for your dogs to adjust to their new house-mates. Separate the dogs when you leave the house or are unable to supervise them. Provide each dog with individual attention and some 'alone time' away from the other dog each day.

Introducing Puppies to Adult Dogs

Puppies usually pester adult dogs unmercifully. Before the age of four months, puppies may not recognize subtle body postures from adult dogs signaling they've had enough. Well socialized adult dogs with good temperaments may set limits with puppies with a growl or snarl. These behaviors are normal and should be allowed. Adult dogs that aren't well socialized or that have a history of fighting with other dogs, may attempt to set limits with more aggressive behaviors such as biting, which could harm the puppy. For this reason, a puppy shouldn't be left alone with an adult dog until it's obvious the puppy isn't in any danger. Be sure to give the adult dog some quiet time away from the puppy, and perhaps, some individual attention as described above.

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