

## Multi-Dog Households

**Why does conflict occur between dogs in multi-dog households?** Just as humans living together occasionally experience conflict, so do our pets. While we may not be able to prevent all disagreements between our household pets, we can limit conflict and prevent conflict escalation by employing a variety of management techniques.



### Managing Multi-Dog Households

**Tip 1. Establish a daily routine.** Stress increases the likelihood of conflict. Having a predictable schedule, such as set meal and walk times, addresses stress caused by uncertainty. Changes in routine increase stress. Exercise and anxiety aids are tools that can help reduce such stress.

**Tip 2. Feed all household pets separately.** Competition over household resources is a common cause of conflict. Ensure all dogs are able to eat and engage with treats uninterrupted. Use barriers to keep your dogs separated during meal times to prevent resource guarding behaviors.

**Tip 3. Tension occurs in tight spaces.** Ensure your dogs have ample space when playing or moving about your home, particularly around valued resources like toys, beds and food.

**Tip 4. Practice reward-based training.** Strengthen your bond with your dogs by teaching [essential skills](#) through rewarding training exercises. Train your dogs one at a time to prevent conflict from resource guarding and to ensure your dogs each get one-on-one time with you.

**Tip 5. Help your dogs take breaks in play.** If your dogs are starting to [play too rough](#), or if one of your dogs is no longer having fun, calmly call your dogs away to help them take a break.

**Tip 6. Give your dogs time apart.** Dogs, just like humans, benefit from having some alone time. Set your dogs up in their own separate spaces with an [enrichment activity](#) each day to promote individual well-being.

**Tip 7. Prevent sibling rivalry.** Littermates raised together in a home often experience conflict in adulthood. “Littermate syndrome” can be avoided by adopting one puppy at a time.

**Tip 8. Be aware of reproductive pressures.** Hormones can influence the likelihood of fighting between dogs. Having your dogs altered will reduce the risk of conflict in the home.

**Tip 9. Seek assistance sooner rather than later.** If conflict between your pets is escalating in intensity or frequency, contact our Behavior Helpline at (505)983-4309 ext 1251 or seek the assistance of a qualified, reward-based trainer.

For more resources, check out <https://sfhumanesociety.org/behavior-library/>