



Troubleshooting Dog-to-Dog Introductions

Why plan out a dog-to-dog introduction? While some dogs are natural social butterflies, others can be wary of strange dogs and may feel the need to defend themselves or their space. If you need to introduce your dog to another dog and aren't sure how they will handle it, there are a few things you can do to set up the meeting so that you have the best chance of a good meet.

Planning Ahead

Meet on neutral territory. This means taking the dogs away from the house to a nearby park or open space for the meet.

Have both dogs on secure equipment. Make sure collars and harnesses are fitted securely and the leashes are strong and easy to handle. Retractable leashes are not recommended.

Avoid adding social pressure to the situation. Social pressure usually comes in 2 forms: tension and protectiveness. When pet guardians are tense, they tighten up on the leash, sending the dog the message that there is something wrong with the situation. Dogs should meet on a slack leash. The other pressure comes from the dog's need to protect his belongings. Before the dogs enter the house all toys, food bowls, rawhides, and any other dog possessions should be picked up and put out of reach. Humans should also keep back and avoid interacting or interfering with the dog's meet.

Keep excitement levels down. If one or both dogs seem overly excited when they see one another, you will need to wait for them to calm down a little before they meet. This might seem almost impossible if your dog loves playing with other dogs, however, if you wait long enough, you will begin to see somewhat calmer behaviors.

Be ready in case things go wrong. Despite everyone's best efforts, sometimes dogs break into fights, so be prepared. Have items such as water bottles, air horns, and metal shake cans handy to break up fights safely.

Remember, sometimes dogs just don't like each other. Just because we want our dog to like another dog, doesn't mean they will. It is important not to force your dog to meet another dog if they are afraid, stressed, or feeling threatened. All that teaches them is that they cannot trust you to back them up when they are uncomfortable.

How to do a dog-to-to introduction from home

Step 1. Take your dog out for a walk and meet up with a friend and the other dog once you are well off your property so your dog is less likely to feel territorial. Don't let them sniff each other yet.

Step 2. Have your friend begin walking in the same direction as you, either alongside you (but not too close) or in front. This will get the dogs used to each other while splitting their attention between the meet and the walk.

Step 3. Once both dogs seem calm, find an open space such as a park or open area to do the meet. There should be several exit routes in case you need to end the meet quickly.

Step 4. Allow the dog that appears most calm, to be the one to start the greeting. The more excitable dog should stay in place on a slack lead and wait for the calm dog to approach.

Step 5. Once the dogs sniff noses, keep the leashes slack and out of the way so they can go through the greeting ritual.

Step 6. Keep the first sniffing brief and then walk the dogs away from each other so they can take a break, sniff the ground and perhaps go potty. If they do potty, take each dog to the other dog's potty spot for a sniff.

Step 7. Repeat the meeting ritual several times until either the dogs don't seem to care anymore or they begin offering play signals.

Step 8. Walk both dogs home together. This time it is okay if they are close enough to interact, so long as they aren't annoying each other or trying to play.

Step 9. When you arrive at the house, let the non-resident dog enter the house or yard first, while the resident dog waits outside. The non-resident dog should be allowed to sniff the area for a couple of moments.

Step 10. The resident dog can enter the house and if everyone seems calm, both handlers can drop the handles to the leashes so that the dogs are free to interact.

Step 11. If after several minutes everything seems okay, the leashes can be removed when you are comfortable with the dogs' interactions.

How to do a dog-to-dog introduction in a fenced area

Step 1. Bring your dog up to the fence of the area and allow him to sniff other dogs through the fence. It is super important that there be no tension on your dog's leash.

Step 2. Once they seem calm, ask the other dog's guardian to call their dog away from the fence.

Step 3. Let your dog in the fenced area. Stay close, but not too close to them so you don't add social tension, but remain close enough to intervene if things don't go well. You can remove the leash when you are confident with your dog's interactions with other dogs.

Training Tip: Because body language plays such an important role in dog greetings and social behavior, become familiar with common dog body language signals and recognize what your own dog looks like when they are feeling calm, confident, fearful, or stressed.

****The information presented here is for supportive and informative purposes only; it is not intended to diagnose, treat or cure any behavioral issue and is not a substitute for professional help. With any behavior problem that persists or worsens, please seek help from a qualified behavior professional.***