



Dog to Dog Introductions

Bringing a new dog into your home to meet your resident dogs can be a tense time. Use the following guide for initial introductions to your dogs, and any new friends' and family members' dogs your dogs will be spending time with.

Step 1: Initial Introductions and Structured Walks

You will need two people for this. Bring the dogs on a walk together. Dogs should be walking parallel to each other about leash distance apart. Walk for several minutes. If the dogs are displaying relaxed body signals, you can let one dog casually wander over to sniff the other dog's rear end. This greeting should last no more than three seconds. Keep the leashes loose and call dog back with your voice. Keep walking.

If the first sniff went well, wait a few more minutes and allow the other dog to sniff the rear end of the first dog. The greeting should last no more than three seconds. Keep walking. Repeat this activity a few times until the dogs seem relaxed around each other.

You can then allow the dogs to meet each other on leash. Each person should stand opposite each other, with the dogs in between and keep the dogs' leashes loose. Allow the dogs to greet each other for about three seconds then call away with a positive tone of voice, avoid pulling on the leash. Look for the following body language signs:

Good Signals

Play Bows
Loose Tail Wagging
Full Body Wiggling
Relaxed Mouth/Jaw
Soft Relaxed Eyes

Warning Signals (STOP!)

Stiff Body Posturing
Whale Eyes (Seeing the whites of the eyes)
Dilated Pupils
Tense Mouth/Jaw
Chattering Teeth
Growling or Barking
Teeth Showing
Hair Standing Up

For more information and a video about reading a dog's body language we recommend signing up for a free Fear Free Happy Homes account and watching this video:

<https://fearfreehappyhomes.com/lessons/dog-body-language-101/>

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Important!!! If you see a lot of uncomfortable, fearful or aggressive signals from either dog, please give both dogs some time out in separate areas then repeat this procedure. Do not rush this step. It may take several days or even weeks of structured walking to facilitate good greetings and form a positive relationship. If the dogs live together, keep dogs separated in the house until a good relationship has started. Do not proceed to Step 2 until your dogs are very comfortable with Step 1.

Step 2: Off Leash Play

If you were successful with Step 1 it is time for the next step. Before bringing both dogs inside or into a fenced in area, please make sure that all toys, rawhides, bones and food bowls are put away. Bring the dogs into the room or fenced area. Allow the dogs some space to move around before dropping their leashes. Keep a close eye on their body language and give the dogs a break if you see any warning signs.

Important!!! Just like people, even dogs that love each other need some time to themselves, especially in the early stages of their relationship (first 3 months). Be sure to give both dogs some alone time while they are still enjoying each other's company. Do not wait until the dogs are agitated with each other to give a time out, as this may cause negative associations next time they see each other.

Meals and Toys

Mealtimes for the dogs should be in separate areas. This will help ensure each dog gets to eat their whole meal and prevent any potential guarding behaviors.

When playing with toys, or offering chew toys to the dogs, make sure there is enough for everyone. At first, play or chew sessions should be separate for the dogs, with a ratio of one person per dog. Eventually if no bullying or guarding behaviors are seen, the dogs can be allowed to play with toys together. Like mealtimes, chew toys, rawhides and Kongs should be given to the dogs separately.

Important!!! If any bullying or resource guarding is seen, please discontinue use during play.

Important!!! Not all toys are created equal! Just like humans, dogs have preferences on types, materials, and kinds of play or chew toys. Be careful when introducing new chew or play toys to make sure guarding does not occur.

If you need help, please reach out to our certified dog professionals here at AWS!

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