



Teaching Pet Parents to Succeed

Introducing a New Dog to Your Resident Dog

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The following protocol can be used for introducing a dog that is merely going to be visiting for a few days/weeks, a foster dog, or a newly adopted dog.

Carefully following this protocol will set the dogs up for maximum success regarding getting along with each other. It also facilitates something equally important – that the new dog bonds with the owner rather than the resident dog.

The whole point is to give the dogs the chance to get acclimated to the smell of the other dog without the stress of having to deal with the other dog face to face, in their space, around their toys, beds, resources, food, people etc.

We want them to learn that even though the other dog is in the house, they are not being adversely affected by the other dog.

This training is based entirely upon the scent to work hand in hand with the dog's natural instincts. Allowing the dog's instincts to teach the lesson is simple and effective. Read through the entire protocol before you begin!

PREPARATION:

- If possible, it's ideal to introduce the scent of each dog to the other dog before they're even in the same house. For example, if a family member will be visiting, they can prepare some scent samples and send them in advance.
 - Take strips of t-shirts, sheets or towels and rub them all over the dog. Place them promptly into Ziplock bags and freeze them. This will protect the integrity of the scent.
 - If you can deliver frozen scent samples that's great! Otherwise send them in the mail with ice packs if possible and refreeze upon arrival.
- Set up two safe areas in your house: one for the resident dog(s) and another for the new dog. Each area (small room, crate, kennel) should have a bowl of water, something to chew on, and a place to rest. Use a closed door or baby gate with a blanket to keep the dogs from seeing each other during stages 1-3.

STAGE ONE:

1. When the new dog arrives at the home it is crucial that the dogs do not make visual contact (no eye contact whatsoever) until the final stage. We cannot let them see one another, but we *will* let them experience the smell of each other through scent articles.
2. Old t-shirts, cut up towels, blankets, dog beds and toys can be used as scent articles. Place scented articles from each dog in the other dog's containment area. The *frequent switching* of these scent articles alone will allow a deeper familiarity between the dogs. We are communicating to the dogs the way they understand... through their nose!

STAGE TWO:

1. Your resident dog should be confined and out of sight when the new dog is out of his cage.
2. Let the new dog roam around the house with your supervision. He will be getting accustomed to his new home and his new owners. You might notice him occasionally rubbing himself against a wall or piece of furniture – or in some way putting his scent, however subtly, around the inside of the house.
3. With a new dog you won't want to let him have too much time to wander around because he might also do some urine marking! (Read and follow the protocol in my "Potty Training your Puppy" handout.) Let him outside as quickly as possible. He can put his scent all over the outside area.
4. Once the new dog has checked out his new environment and had the opportunity to leave his own scent about the house, place the new dog in his safe area of confinement and take the scent articles from there to place in the resident dog's safe area.

STAGE THREE:

1. Take the scent articles from the resident dog's safe area and place them with the new dog.
2. Let the resident dog out to roam around the house and yard. The first time the resident dog goes exploring he will probably vigorously explore the scent left around the home by the new dog until he is satisfied the intruder has "escaped". Your resident dog might be very excited, or even panicked. Once he's had the chance to have a good sniff around, distract him with a yummy stuffed Kong, a game of fetch or just sit quietly with him. It's important that the scent discovery period is as positive as possible for both dogs.
3. Repeat stages two and three many times daily. Remember to swap the scent articles each time.
4. Watch both dogs' body language to calculate when they are ready to meet face to face. In either dog, look for excessive interest in the other dog's presence. Racing around looking for the other dog, dashing from place to place or general over-arousal means they're not ready to meet yet!
5. **You're ready when neither dog is taking any notice of the presence of the other dog.** Until the resident dog is behaving just how he did before the other dog arrived in the house and not showing excessive interest, there is a good chance that if you introduce them, there will be trouble.
6. Until the resident dog is behaving in that way there is a good chance that if you introduce them while he's showing excessive interest in the other dog, there will be trouble between them.
7. For the resident dog to understand the new smell, he should be let out of his safe area as many times a day as possible. The resident dog should only be let out after the new dog has played and been put away.

8. With these short routines, both dogs are familiarizing each other at a faster rate. The more times you let your new dog and then your resident dog out, the quicker they will be acquainted.
9. When your resident dog comes out of his safe area and does not follow the scent of the new dog, he has given his permission. This process takes varying lengths of time depending on the dogs' like or dislike of other dogs. It can take minutes, hours or weeks depending on the individual dogs. When both dogs are showing NO interest in the scent of the other dog this is the best time to physically introduce them.

STAGE FOUR:

Introducing the dogs in a large fenced area (PREFERRED)

1. If possible, introduce the dogs in a large fenced area. For territorial reasons, the introductions should not be on your property for the first time. A neighbor's fenced in yard, a fenced in ball field (when no other dogs or people might interfere), or any other fenced in area will be an appropriate meeting ground. Leashes may not take the place of a fenced in area; holding the leashes may potentially bring out aggression.
2. Let the resident dog run around the field or fenced yard, with the new dog out of sight. The resident dog is laying his now familiar scent.
3. Now it is time for the new dog to play in the field. Take the resident dog away and out of sight and let the new dog smell the familiar resident dog's scent.
4. Now that the dogs have already been comfortably introduced via scent, they are ready to meet. Bring the resident dog in and let go of the leash. The dogs usually run over to greet each other, smell, posture... and have no inclination to fight.

Introducing the dogs with parallel walking

1. If there is no safe area to introduce the dogs then taking them for a walk on leash can substitute. Walk parallel to one another, if necessary on opposite sides of the street and get gradually closer. If either dog is showing excessive interest in the other dog then don't bring them any closer – it will probably be a bad greeting!
2. If one dog is more calm and stable than the other you can walk that dog in front and gradually let the other dog get close enough to do a quick butt sniff and go away. Keep practicing until the whole process is very calm then reverse roles.

Introducing the dogs in a small backyard

1. If you are forced to introduce the dogs in a fenced back yard, probably a fairly small area, let the resident dog out first. Both dogs should have leashes attached but not held, (unless there are lots of trees & bushes they could get caught on and in that case use a very short, maybe 18" leash so at least you've got something you could get hold of in an emergency other than the collar/harness) and you should have a garden hose with a spray attachment set on "jet" turned on at the ready.
2. Don't hang around near the door area. Let the new dog out. Ideally you would have several people present and all keep chatting in a relaxed manner and **walking around**.
3. Don't stand still, staring at the dogs to see what happens. Keep it upbeat, but not over excited, and relaxed. Walking around, distracting the dogs if you see tension, will help to keep the meeting relaxed and successful.

Tips

- If either dog has a history of aggression towards other dogs this does not necessarily mean they cannot co-exist with another dog – it does mean that they probably need a long slow period of acclimatization to the new dog being on their property and then very careful management once they have met to ensure that they continue to get along. It is best to consult a professional behavior consultant for help with those types of dogs!
- For multi-dog households you don't need to keep all the resident dogs separated from each other – just the new dog should be separated from the other dogs.
- Make sure to have a bowl of fresh water for each dog throughout this process. Don't forget it during stage four!
- When in doubt, spend extra time in stages 1-3. If you still have concerns, contact me and we can discuss the situation.

Related Reading: Introducing a Shelter Dog, The Three D's, Meeting Your Dog's Needs