

Introducing a New Dog to Your Resident Dog(s).

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Dogs are social creatures by nature. However, they have their own personalities, likes, dislikes, and insecurities. Just because your new dog is generally “friendly” and had a good meeting with your current pet in a neutral location, doesn’t mean this will continue once you get into your current pet’s territory. Often we want to immediately bring the new dog into the center of our lives so that they feel loved and like a part of the family. However, moving to a new location with a new family and new dogs can be very overwhelming for a dog, especially a rescue dog, and this can lead to them reacting negatively towards your other dog. Your other dog may also be a bit more negative towards this dog than the other meeting as they are intruding into his home, playing with his toys, and taking up his people’s attention. Additionally, dogs can react to major changes in family structure and environment with behaviors that we consider inappropriate, but are actually symptoms of feeling insecure, nervous, and confused. These can include:

- Growling – Dog is communicating that they are uncomfortable and nervous. Growling is how dogs AVOID physical conflict and should NEVER be punished!
- Resource guarding – The new dog and resident dog both may not know how to share well and don’t know each other well enough to share their toys and food. This is them showing insecurity and discomfort and should NOT be punished. Rather, it is important that they each get space and time to get to know each other and get comfortable with each other!
- Marking – Each dog may not be comfortable in a shared territory and may try to claim their own areas and establish boundaries for the other animals by marking. This is more common in intact dogs, but still happens for neutered animals and even female dogs!
- Destructive behavior – Tearing things up is stress relieving for dogs and even a dog that is well behaved normally may resort to destruction to self soothe when a new dog comes in.

Most of the time, and with proper introductions and management, these behaviors go away on their own as the dogs get to know each other and become more familiar with the new environment and routine. However, it is always a good idea to consult a trainer if these behaviors persist after the first couple of weeks or if they are severe enough that injury is possible.

Properly introducing your new pet into your current pet’s territory can make all the difference between successfully integrating your new pet into your home and having

altercations and incidents. Some dogs acclimate to a new place and bond with their new family members quickly, as if they were always meant to be there. Others need more time to decompress for various reasons. You should be watching how your dogs interact and make decisions to move the process along based on those interactions rather than rushing them into a situation that might result in an incident. Every incident sets the process back and too many incidents can lead to the dogs forming a negative opinion of each other that can be hard to work out.

Basic Rules for the First 2 Weeks (at least!)

1. New Dogs (ND) should not be left unattended with Resident Dogs (RD).
2. ND and RD should be leashed for the first few days at least so that you can easily separate them if necessary.
3. Behavior and interactions between ND and RD should be monitored at all times. Dogs should be separated if there are signs of tension or overstimulation.
4. RD should not be allowed into ND's crate or bed and vice versa.
5. ND and RD should be fed in the same room at the same time if possible as this builds trust and bonding behavior. Feedings should be supervised and each dog should be protected from being bothered by the other dogs while they are eating. Make sure there is enough space between them that each dog is comfortable eating in their spot.
6. ND and RD should take structured walks together twice a day at least. The purpose of these walks is for bond building rather than exercise, so these walks can be short down the street and back type things. These should not replace exercising walks if kept short.

Proper Introductions

1. The first introduction between ND and RD should be outdoors in the yard or driveway. Though this is RD's territory, it is more neutral than inside the house. It should be short and positive. If there is stiff body posture, growling, or any kind of stress behavior with either of the dogs, it's best that they don't meet physically, but instead just get rewarded for seeing each other at a distance.
2. After the first introduction, immediately take ND and RD on a short walk together. Then bring them inside and feed them a small meal together at a distance where both dogs are comfortable, but preferably in the same room. Both dogs should be leashed and supervised for this so that you can keep them from interfering with the other dog's food. This sets a precedent for ND being a part of the family and routine.
3. After the meal, give ND a leashed tour of the home. Make sure RD is either leashed and being handled by someone else or absent so that they don't crowd or bother ND as he learns about his new home.

4. All interactions between ND and RD need to be positive. If this means they only interact for a few minutes at a time to sniff each other, then this is all they should get. Frequent, positive interactions, especially in the first few days, are vital to having a successful integration. If either of the dogs show negativity towards each other, they should be redirected to a different task and/or separated.
5. NEVER punish either dog physically or get harsh with them if they exhibit antisocial behavior! All they will learn from that is that when the other dog is around, you get mad and bad things happen to them. This can cause their view of the other dog to become more and more negative. "Every time that dog shows up Mom/Dad is going to get mad so I have to be ready to fight him off". Instead, teach a leave it command and have the dog practice some basic skills while the other dog is around so that they learn to focus on you. This way you can reward them when the other dog is around and they will start to associate that other dog's presence with good things happening.
6. DO NOT FORCE interactions between ND and any member of the family, including the human ones. These are big changes to ND's life. A new home, a new family, a new canine companion, new sounds, new smells, new food, new routine. It is a lot for them to take in. Rescue dogs especially may take time learning to trust and have incidents in their backgrounds that can make the transition more difficult. Often times when you meet the dog, they have been with their foster long enough to come out of their shell and are comfortable at the time of meeting. Once you bring them home, it will take them time to go through that process again.
7. Do not let ND have the run of the whole house right away. Confine him to one or a few rooms for the first few days/weeks except for brief tours of the rest of the house so that he isn't so overwhelmed by all of the new area.
8. Make sure that you prepare a space for ND. This space should be a quiet place he can go to have some time to himself. Coming into a new home with a new family can be overwhelming and allowing the ND to relax and unwind can create a much more positive experience for everyone. Make one of the rooms his "base of operations" where his crate/bed is. He should have frequent breaks from RD in this room so that they have time to get used to each other without being forced to constantly share and interact. If the ND has some anxiety being alone, make sure the space is part of the main living area and use an X-pen to give him some space that is all his own while still feeling like a part of things and a part of the family.
9. Gradually reduce the time ND spends in break time and gradually open up new rooms to ND as he gets more comfortable and confident. This process can go quickly with dogs that "fit right in" to the new house. Some dogs take more time to get used to the new surroundings and family.

Trouble integrating the new dog into the family with the resident dogs is one of the most common reasons dogs are returned to rescue. Most of the time this happens because the new owners of the dog just expected the new dog and their resident dog to be instant best friends

and didn't give either dog enough space or time to properly get to know each other. Following this guide will help the process go more smoothly so that your dogs can forge a lifelong friendship and bond!

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