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Introducing Dogs

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Dogs are social and most enjoy the company of other dogs. However, your resident dog may not be accustomed to having other dogs in his home. The new dog may be nervous coming in to a new home and having a new four-legged housemate. Here are some tips you can use to maximize the chances of success:

1. Preparation

Before bringing the new dog home, pick up anything that your resident dog might not want the new dog to take immediate possession of, this includes food bowls, toys, beds, etc. Even if your dog has never shown any signs of possessiveness, it is best to be cautious.

2. The initial meeting

Ask a family member or friend to help you during the initial meeting.

Meet in a neutral area such as a park or your front yard.

Allow the dogs to approach each other with loose leashes - not pulling towards each other. If the dogs are pulling on leash, spend some time taking the pulling dog for a walk to expel some excess energy. If one dog is more eager to approach than the other or you cannot get the dogs to be on loose leashes consider taking the dogs for a walk together. The dogs should walk parallel to each other either side by side or one behind the other. Increase or decrease distance between the dogs as needed and if one of the dogs is following the other, allow the dogs to change who follows who.

Keep the interactions brief at first. Allow the dogs to come close to each other but if the greeting gets tense, call the dogs away from each other and walk away providing some distance in between them. When new dogs meet each other it is not uncommon for one or both to become a little defensive, nervous, or give a brief correction to the other dog. Corrections may include stiff posturing, hair standing on end, tense body language, showing teeth, growling or snapping. Don't worry too much about these behaviors during the introduction, these are normal communication behaviors for dogs. If this happens, call the dogs away and walk them away from each other. If things are not going as well, take both of the dogs inside for some time to relax but keep them separate from each other. You can retry the introduction a few hours later. Give them time, just like when you meet someone new, it may take a few introductions before you become friends.



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If things are going well, repeat the on leash introduction in the backyard. When the dogs have shown that they are becoming relaxed and interested in one another drop the leashes but keep them attached. This will allow you to pick up one or both leashes if you need to call the dogs away from each other.

After the outdoor introduction, pick up the leashes and repeat the introduction inside the house. If the outdoor introduction took a while you may want to give the dogs a break by taking them inside and keeping them separate and pick up where you left off a few hours later. During the indoor introduction start with leashes on and then when they are ready drop the leashes but keep them attached to the dogs so you can easily pick up one or both leashes if you need to move the dogs away from each other.

3. Provide each dog a safe resting place

We recommend that dogs have a crate so they can always have their own space, like a doggy bedroom. If you do not have a crate, be sure to set up an area for your new dog that the other dog(s) cannot easily get to if your new dog decides to rest there. It is also a good idea to make sure that other family members and guests do not disturb your dog while they are resting in their designated area.

Bringing a new dog into your home can be exciting for everyone but it can also be exhausting for your new dog. Many dogs adopted from shelters will sleep deeply on their first few days in your home.

What NOT to do:

1. Do not hold either dog in your arms for any parts of the greeting. This may cause the dog to feel trapped or threatened.
2. Do not put the dogs in small spaces together until they are completely comfortable with each other. Each dog should have their own food bowl, crate, and toys. Please the food bowls far apart during feeding times. Teach each dog to eat from his own bowl. Watch out for dogs going through small spaces, such as doorways, and make sure that both dogs have enough space to get through. Sometimes dogs that don't know each other well can have issues when they are caught in these "choke points."
3. If the dogs get into a fight, DO NOT allow them to "fight it out." Permitting the dogs to do this can set the tone for a difficult relationship. Instead, interrupt the dogs and separate them until you can repeat the introduction from the start again.