



# Introducing a Dog to Other Pets

## Choose a Neutral Location

Introduce the dogs in a neutral location so that neither dog is tempted to act territorial. Each dog should be handled by a separate person. Walk the dogs parallel to each other, starting about ten feet apart and gradually closing the distance if each dog seems comfortable. Once the dogs are near each other, continue your walk, letting them take turns sniffing each other. Once the dogs are perfectly comfortable around each other, you can bring them back home and have them enter together. It's a good idea to watch all interactions closely and to leave leashes hanging on the dogs during their first free movement interactions. Make sure you have more than one person home so that any altercations can be easily broken up, and never leave a leash dragging on an unattended dog.

## Use Positive Reinforcement

From the first meeting, help both dogs experience “good things” when they're in each other's presence. Before they get near each other, start giving them treats just for looking at the other dog and being in his presence. Begin parallel walking, and when they dogs are comfortable being near each other, let them sniff each other briefly. As they do, talk to them in a happy, friendly voice and never use a worried or threatening tone. Don't allow them to sniff for too long, this can sometimes escalate to an aggressive response. After a quick sniff, have each handler call their dog away from the other and back to them with happy talk, and reward each dog with a treat.

If everything is going well, continue the walk and give the dogs a treat anytime they notice the other dog. Continue to allow them to interact and sniff each other for brief amounts of time.

## Be Aware of Body Postures

You can tell how each dog is feeling about this meet and greet by paying attention to their body language. A “play bow” can indicate a particular dog is comfortable and that things are going well. This is an invitation to play, and a posture that usually elicits friendly behavior from the other dog. Hair standing on the dog's back indicates excitement, keep an eye on him and reward good interactions with the other dog.

Watch carefully for postures that indicate an aggressive response, such as teeth-baring, deep growls, a stiff body, or a prolonged stare. If you see these postures, interrupt the interaction meeting with happy talk and calmly getting distance between the dogs by having them interested in something else.

## When to Get Help

If the introductions don't go smoothly, contact a professional animal trainer or behaviorist immediately. The longer the problem continues, the harder it can be to resolve. Aversive punishments won't work, and could make things much worse. Choose a force-free trainer with experience in fear and aggression.

