

# Introducing your new dog or puppy to your current dog

*Dogs Trust*

Are you bringing home a new dog soon? Here's how to handle them meeting your current dog.



Images of pooch pals are all around us. Dogs play together in TV ads while our Instagram feeds are full of snuggling pups.

The reality of relationships between dogs in the same household can be different. While some dogs become firm friends soon after meeting, other relationships can take longer to blossom.

Some dogs may never get on well. But there's lots you can do to move things in the right direction.

If you're considering getting another dog or will be welcoming one home soon, this guide is for you.

## Advice that applies whatever the age of your new dog

**Get expert advice early on**

Although you'd love your dogs to become the best of pals, each dog is an individual and some will always prefer their own space and company. An elderly dog – for example – may not welcome a bouncy puppy in the household.

For that reason, it's a good idea to get advice from a [qualified dog behaviourist or trainer](#) before you start looking for a dog or puppy.

They should help you identify the kind of dog that would be a good fit in your household and help both dogs with the transition to the new situation. There are lots of benefits to engaging a behaviourist or trainer early on.

## **Ensure all the dogs' vaccinations are up to date**

You want all your dogs to be safe and well. That's why it's important that their vaccinations are up to date before they meet. Otherwise, they could pass infections to one another.

A puppy will be vulnerable to infection from your existing dog until at least one week after they've completed their [puppy vaccination course](#). You'll need to ensure your current dog is up to date with their vaccinations before you bring your new puppy home.

Not sure about the vaccination status of any of the dogs? Check with your vet (for your current dog) or with the seller or rehoming centre (for your new pooch).

## **Adopting from Dogs Trust? The centre will arrange a family visit**

If you're adopting from us, our rehoming centre will arrange for your whole family to meet your potential adoptive dog – including your current dog(s). This helps set both dogs up for success by first introducing them on neutral ground and allowing them to build the foundations for a happy life together.

You can also get telephone-based behaviour advice after adopting, and for the whole of your dog's life. Find out more about [post-adoption support](#) by calling 0300 303 3738.

## **Buying your dog? Ask about arranging a meeting**

If you're getting your dog from a private buyer, see if it'll be possible for the two dogs to meet on neutral ground before you commit to buy. This allows the dogs time and space to get introduced to each other in a safe and appropriate way. It'll help you get a sense of whether they might be a good fit to live with each other.

## **Start off with scent swapping**

Dogs get a lot of information about the world from their noses. You can introduce your dogs before they meet using scent swapping.

One way of doing this is by taking a blanket, toy or something else with the dogs' scent on it from each dog. Place it in a safe and appropriate area of the other dog's environment, like in the garden, and allow them to investigate it at their own pace.

## **Get set up before the dogs meet**

Get prepared for the dogs' first meeting in your house. If your current dog's bowls or bedding will be in a different place when your new dog arrives, it's a good idea to prepare them by moving their things a few days in advance.

On the day your new dog will be arriving, pack away your current dog's toys, bedding and food bowls for a while to avoid competition over them.

Once you've got past the first meeting and first hour or two together, you should lay out each dog's bowls and bedding in separate areas of the house. This way each can eat, drink and rest alone in peace.

# How to introduce an adult dog to your current dog

If you'll be bringing home an adult dog to meet your existing dog, here's how to smooth things along on the day.

## Introducing your new dog to your current dog for the first time

### Give each dog their own human

Ensure each dog is on lead and enlist a friend or family member to help you so each dog has their own human.

Bonus tip: Encourage each dog to walk on a loose lead and keep their attention on their human to help have a calm introduction.

### Keep the focus on the humans

Start to walk each dog separately at a distance from the other. Make sure each pooch keeps their focus on the person walking them and don't get close enough for them to become excited or worried. Remember to bring treats with you so you can reward them for calm ...

### Get closer

Once they have had some time to explore their surroundings, slowly start to walk a bit closer to each other.

### Time to greet

Providing both dogs are relaxed, you can let them greet each other on-lead. Let them say hello and have a sniff, then keep moving. Repeat this a few times if both dogs are comfortable with it.

If at any time either of the dogs shows signs of being uncomfortable, move away and give them space. You could even have multiple short introductions spread across a few days and weeks, always remember to go at a pace each dog is comfortable with.

## Going back to your home for the first time

If things have gone well at the meeting outside, you can move things to your home.

It's a good idea to use indoor leads (also called house lines) on both dogs so you can separate them if needed.

Take the dogs to a neutral area, not a place where the existing dog sleeps or a bedroom. If you have a garden, that's a great place to start. Avoid narrow areas inside or places where there may be competition for resources (such as your current dog's feeding area).

Make sure each dog has plenty of space and give them time to sniff and explore around their surroundings. This will give them something to focus on apart from the other dog.

## Tips for the first days and weeks

Always oversee the dogs' interactions during the first few days and weeks and keep them on leads or house lines so you can separate them if needed.

When that's not possible, separate the dogs by putting them in different rooms. Do this until you're confident they're comfortable with each other.

Give both dogs a regular break from one another by separating them into different areas.

When they do seem comfortable with one another, you can add in some [enrichment activities](#) so they have

something else to focus on.

If either dog seems to be guarding food or toys, our [advice on resource guarding](#) should help you.

## **What to do if tensions arise**

Watch the [dogs' body language](#) for any signs that they are becoming overly aroused or distressed.

If either dog shows low-level discomfort, such as walking away from the other dog when approached, turning their face away or licking their lips, encourage the dogs to give each other space by calling one of them away or asking them to each go to their own bed.

This will increase the distance between them and allow you to give them time to relax before allowing them to interact again.

By developing an understanding of the subtle signs and signals that your dog might not be comfortable, you can intervene early and give them the space and time they need away from each other.

If either dog shows significant signs of discomfort such as barking, lunging at or snapping at the other dog, separate both dogs immediately. If either dog has an injury, consult your vet straight away.

Give them both the time and space they need away from each other to cool off. This may be a few hours or a few days, depending on the dog and the situation.

Offer them each something fun to do individually to help them relax once they've had a bit of time away from the situation. An appropriate enrichment activity could be a good way to help them relax.

You'll need to consult an accredited trainer or behaviourist before trying to introduce them again.

## **Advice for introducing a puppy to your current dog**

Puppies are still learning doggy social skills, so they'll need some extra supervision and support from you.

### **Meeting for the first time**

It's a good idea for your dogs to meet for the first time in a safe place. This should be safe, if it's at least a week since your puppy had their first set of vaccinations. Choose a place with low dog traffic to avoid the risk of infection, such as a quiet park or grassy area.

Follow our step-by-step guide in the adult dog section above for what to do next, always going at your dogs' pace.

### **Going inside the house for the first time**

If the first meeting outside your home has gone well, or if the first meeting needs to be at your home, the following tips should help:

- keep both dogs on their leads (ideally indoor leads or house lines)
- take them into the garden, or the largest indoor neutral space possible
- avoid narrow areas or places where there may be competition for resources (such as your current dog's feeding area).

### **Overseeing the dogs' interaction**

Puppies are discovering the world and have lots to learn, both from you and from your adult dog.



They don't yet understand all the social cues from your current dog so are likely to need extra supervision and support from you.

You'll need to oversee the dogs' interactions during the first few days and weeks. When that's not possible, separate your dog and puppy by putting them in different areas of the house with a closable door between.

Ensure they both have access to food, water, toys and enrichment activities. It's also important to do this from time to time anyway to give the dogs a break from one another.

## **What to do if tensions arise**

Dogs growl as a warning that they need some space – it's natural behaviour.

If your adult dog growls at your puppy or shows other signs of discomfort such as lunging or snapping, encourage your puppy to move away from your dog and give them something fun to do in their own safe space.

If your puppy has been injured, seek veterinary advice straight away. Get advice from a qualified behaviourist or trainer before attempting another introduction.

Should your puppy seem nervous or worried, call the adult dog away and engage them with something else. Provide them with something fun, such as food, treats or attention away from the puppy. Give both dogs some breaks in the interaction, so it isn't prolonged.

## **The start of a lifetime of friendship**

With careful handling, the first meeting between your new and your current dog could be the start of a beautiful friendship. Your faithful friends could soon be playing in the park and snuggling together on the sofa.

Remember, though, that every dog is an individual with their own unique needs and preferences. Some dogs would love the company of another dog, while others will always prefer to have their own space.

By taking introductions slowly and at each dog's pace you have the best chance to make sure it is a good fit for them both and set them up for a successful life together. It also allows you to have the time to identify any potential issues before they become problems.

If you have any concerns, and you feel you need support, don't hesitate to ask for it. If you adopted from Dogs Trust, our post-adoption support is here for you.

If you bought your dog rather than adopting, then you could contact the seller or breeder for advice. Professional help from qualified behaviourists and trainers is also available.

With some good advice behind you and a patient approach, your dogs should soon be on the right path together.

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