

How to Introduce a New Dog to Your Current Dog

AKC Staff

Dogs are social animals and most enjoy the company of others. Just like humans, some dogs have more outgoing personalities, and others are more reserved. Whether you just brought home a [new puppy](#) and are introducing him to the dog you already have, or you are walking at a park with your dog, a proper introduction is very important.

Introducing a New Puppy to Your Dog

You finally picked out your new puppy and are ready to bring them home. Everyone is excited about the new addition, but will the dog at home feel the same way? Before bringing in the new addition, prepare your home. A crate, an exercise pen, and baby gates are all very helpful tools and will make life much easier when you need to quickly separate the dogs. Plan on establishing a [routine](#) from the very beginning, too.

It is important to understand that puppies are still developing their communication skills. This means that they don't understand the rules set in place by adult dogs. When they first enter their new home, puppies have a lot to learn, both from you and the established dog. Puppies immediately start looking for someone to play with and when they can't find another puppy, the adult dog is the next best thing. Your dog may or may not appreciate this! Interactions must be carefully supervised to keep both dogs safe and happy.

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When it's time for the dogs to meet, it should be in a neutral place – not inside the established dog's home. You might take the older dog along when you pick up the puppy, and they can ride home (each in a separate crate) in the car together. When everyone is home, take them out, walk them around on leashes in the front yard, and walk inside together. An unknown puppy barging in the front door can seem like an invasion to even the friendliest, most mellow dog. If taking the older dog along isn't an option, the dogs should still meet outside of the home and walk in together.

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Do not reprimand the adult dog for growling at the puppy. This is how dogs let others know that they are unhappy about something. Growling can let the puppy know that it is time to take a step back from the situation and that is a good lesson for your puppy to learn. This is the way older dogs communicate that a puppy has crossed the line, and it is acceptable as long as the adult dog does not make inappropriate contact and injure the puppy.

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To make sure interactions stay safe and [the elder dog is not overwhelmed](#), supervise all interactions between the dogs. If you notice that the elder dog is becoming agitated by the puppy, it is time to separate or redirect the puppy to another task before things get out of hand. When you are not able to directly supervise the puppy, they should be placed behind a gate and in an [exercise pen](#) or in a crate.

You should give the elder dog a break from the puppy several times during the day. You can do this by crating either dog. Periods of separation during the day can take the pressure off the elder dog and give both dogs much-needed breaks. Puppies, while adorable, can be very annoying, so you must also make sure that the older dog gets plenty of one-on-one attention from the family without the new pup horning in.

When you are supervising interactions, reward both dogs for behaving appropriately. Make sure your puppy is getting enough exercise, both mental and physical, so all their attention is not focused on the older dog. A great activity is taking both dogs on a walk. Eventually, with an introduction that has not been rushed, the puppy will develop the communication skills he needs to succeed, and your dogs will be great friends.

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Introducing Your Dog to a Strange Dog

It is almost guaranteed that when you and your canine buddy are out on a walk, you will come into contact with another dog.

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Always ask the other owner if an interaction with their dog is okay. Some dogs may be timid or reactive, and interactions with them may not be ideal for either dog. If a meeting has been approved by both you and the other owner, you can proceed to let the dogs meet. Some dogs may act differently on a leash than they do when off-leash. This can be due to feeling trapped and that they cannot get away if an altercation occurs.

Once they come in contact, normal dog behavior will likely occur, and the dogs will sniff each other in greeting. Signs that the meeting is going well include relaxed facial expressions, [play bows](#), tails wagging fast, and wiggling their hind ends.

Signs that the meeting is too much for either dog may include yawning, turning their heads away from the other dog, tense jaws, tails held low, shaking, and the hair standing up along their backs. These behaviors indicate the dog is nervous about the meeting, and it is best to separate the dogs and continue on your walk before the situation has a chance to escalate.

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