

Introducing a new dog to the household

Before bringing a new pet into your heart and home, ask yourself, "Why do I want another pet?" Two pets are not necessarily just as easy or just as much work as one. Another pet will require time, energy, expense and patience. Many people who do not have enough time for one pet think that two will be better because they will keep each other company. If you think a second pet will help alleviate loneliness, boredom or behavior problems with your resident pet, think again. If you don't have time to spend with one dog, you surely will not have time to spend with two. Many dog owners end up with two bored and misbehaving pets instead of one. Furthermore, a second pet will not necessarily provide your dog with the companionship you have in mind.

Dogs are social animals and most enjoy the company of other dogs. However, it can be tricky to introduce a new puppy or dog into the family. The resident dog may not be accustomed to having other dogs in his home or he may not appreciate having to share your attention. First impressions are important, so you'll need to do what you can to maximize the chances of success.

Preparation

Before you bring the new puppy or dog home, remove anything your resident dog might guard, such as food bowls, bones, chew toys, toys, and beds. Even if your dog has never exhibited possessive tendencies before, it is best to exercise caution. If your home is cluttered, clean it up. Congested areas are more likely to trigger aggression because the dogs may feel forced upon each other.

The Initial Meeting: Before You Bring the New Dog Home

Enlist the help of a family member or friend, so there is a person to attend to each dog during this initial meeting. Make your way, separately, to a neutral area, such as a park. An open area in the park is perfect because there are plenty of interesting sights and sounds to distract the dogs and they can move away from each other if they choose. It is best not to introduce the dogs in your house or yard because the resident dog may become territorial.

Bring the dogs together and allow them to greet each other. Do your best to keep slack in the leashes (or let the leashes drop) so the dogs won't feel like they are being held back. Allow them to sniff. A puppy will typically adopt a submissive position, such as lying down or even rolling over to be investigated by the adult dog. A well-socialized adult dog will likely check out the puppy and then either play with him or ignore him. When two adult dogs meet, they often stand tall and "posture" to each other. They may sniff each other, circle each other, urinate, play, or just decide to ignore each other. Don't panic if they push each other a bit, growl, or even try standing up on each other's shoulders. Allow them to do what they do to establish a relationship, with as little intervention from you as possible.

If the dogs try to fight, however, you will need to intervene. If you see signs of serious tension, such as raised hackles, growling, showing teeth, prolonged stares, or snapping, call the dogs away before things escalate. Try not to pull them away by the leash, as the tension on the leash might trigger an attack. Keep the interactions brief at first. After the dogs greet, go for a walk together. If you have multiple dogs, introduce each dog to the newcomer separately before bringing everyone together as a group.

Bringing the New Dog Home

Walk home from the park with the dogs together and just walk into your home as though nothing has changed. If you have a yard, go there first and let the dogs off leash to hang out while you supervise. When the dogs are ready, bring them into the house. If they got along well at the park and in the yard, let the resident dog off the leash first. Permit the new puppy or dog to explore the room or house on the leash. If the resident dog acts in a friendly manner, let the new pet off the leash.

Always supervise interactions between the dogs until they have been friendly with each other for one to two weeks. They should not be alone together before then. Keep your mealtime, bedtime, walk and play routines the same as before the new dog arrived, so things don't seem too different for the resident dog.

For the first few weeks, keep an eye on the dogs in situations that might trigger aggression, such as when you come home, when guests come over, going out to the yard, coming in from the yard, preparing to go for a walk, mealtime (theirs and yours), and playtime.

It is very important that you spend time with each dog alone so that the resident dog continues to receive one-on-one attention and the new dog develops a bond with you. If you only hang out with the dogs together, they will become attached primarily to each other, rather than to you. The new dog needs to bond with you. With a few simple methods, you can make the transition of getting another dog easier both for yourself and your animals.

