



DOG INTRODUCTIONS AND LIVING IN HARMONY

Bringing a new pet into your home for the first time can sometimes be a little overwhelming. Whether it's introducing them to the family or other family pets, it can make anyone a little uneasy. It is important to remember one thing during this process: these dogs come from a wide variety of backgrounds and may not "fit in" right away. The majority of the dogs that will be coming into your home are street dogs - dogs that have never once stepped foot into a normal home. As a foster, it should calm your mind knowing that your home is going to possibly be the first comfortable place these dogs have ever stepped foot in; however, to them, this can be terrifying. There are a lot of "unknowns" and "scary" things that come along with living like a normal dog. Please know that your friends at Underdog are ALWAYS on your side and here to help! We simply ask that you make the commitment to that dog, and the support will be behind you every step of the way.

The first meeting can set the tone of the relationship to follow, so do everything you can to make the initial meeting as successful as possible. Remember to be patient. Bringing 2 dogs together into a single home requires that everyone make some adjustments.

It is best for dogs coming out of the shelter to have some time to decompress before having face to face meetings with new dogs in your home. This could mean days or even a couple of weeks of keeping the dogs separated before an initial meeting.

Step 1: The Introduction

1. Prior to the dogs meeting, it is helpful to have them explore each other's scent. You can do this by swapping out dog blankets, or just rubbing down each of the dogs and taking those towels to each for the dogs to smell.
2. For the first introduction, it is best to meet on neutral territory, such as a neighbor's yard or small park. (If you have multiple dogs, let each dog meet the new dog one at a time so that your new dog is not overwhelmed by your whole pack at once.)
3. One way to introduce your dogs is to first take them for a walk together. Keep them apart (at least 10 feet) and walk them in the same direction so that they are unable to stare at each other.
4. Take turns letting each of the dogs be in the lead, so that the following dog can read the other's "pee-mail".
5. Once each dog is comfortable you can try walking parallel to each other. Keep plenty of space between you so that your dogs cannot reach each other.

6. Try & stop occasionally and ask each dog to pay attention to their owner. Click for attention & reward with a treat. If your dog will NOT take a treat, she might be over her threshold. Increase the distance between each of the walking pairs.
7. Once you can easily get attention from both dogs, and they are both taking treats, it is time to let them meet each other.
8. Keep both dogs on leash but make sure leashes are kept loose, do not pull on the leash.
9. Don't force any interaction between the dogs.
10. Make the first introduction positive, light hearted and **brief**. As the dogs sniff and get acquainted, encourage them with a happy voice. Keeping initial greetings brief (2 – 3 seconds) and ending on a positive note each time will leave them wanting more of each other. *Do NOT* pull your dog's leash to get them to come back to you. Pat your leg, call his name, shuffle your feet in the opposite direction, make a kissy noise – but do not tighten the leash. Remember BRIEF introductions. Don't risk the relationship getting off on the wrong foot by letting the first meeting go on too long until something bad happens.
11. Closely observe the dogs' body language. Stiff, slow body movements, tensed mouth or teeth bearing, growls and prolonged stares are signs that a dog feels threatened or aggressive. If you see this, lead the dogs apart and give them more distance from each other.
12. If the introductions have gone well, once again walk them in a parallel manner shortening the distance between the dogs. Gradually have one person hold both leashes with one dog on each side.
13. Walk the dogs together around the house and the yard before taking them inside.

If you know none of the dog's resource guard their food or toys you can proceed with step 14. If you are unsure, still skip this step. Instead you can bring them in and calmly sit across the room waiting for the dogs to calm down before proceeding to step 15.

14. See highlighted area above before proceeding with this step. Once inside you can tether, crate your dogs, or separate with a secure baby gate where they can see each other, but cannot reach each other. Give them something like a Kong, a bully stick, or another object they can chew on. If one dog will not relax & chew, then stop with the introductions and maybe the next time you will be able to make it to this step.
15. Prior to dropping the dogs' leashes in the house, make sure ALL toys, bones, and chew items are picked up and put away. When you drop their leashes for the first time, avoid closely confined spaces such as doorways, gates or small rooms. Avoid clustering people around the dogs, and allow the dogs room to move. Once again, keep these play sessions short and end on a positive note. Also do not let them off leash in too large of an area either. It is easy for them to start running and the energy level can easily amp up and spill over into a confrontation.
16. You can start to gradually increase the time they spend together. Remember to always end when everybody is still getting along and being happy. You want your dog to be excited to see the dog at the next get-together.

Step 2: Living in Harmony

1. For the first couple weeks at home avoid squabbles by picking up all toys, chews, food bowls and your current dog's favorite items.
2. Give each dog his own water and food bowls, bed and toys.
3. Give special treats or chews only when dogs are separated in crates or confinement areas.
4. Confine the dogs in separate areas when you are not home.
5. Keep play times short and watch for pauses in play.
 - Dog who are playing appropriately, periodically pause and take short breaks during play.
2. When the dogs interact, interrupt any growling or bullying with a phrase like "too bad" then separate them for several minutes.
3. Praise your dogs when they interact nicely.
4. Give older or less energetic dogs private time and space where they can rest and enjoy down time.

Signs that Indicate a Problem

1. One dog constantly pushes others aside for your attention or petting.
2. Your dogs always seem to watch each other warily.
3. Your dogs are frequently up on their back paws during play.
4. "Dirty Looks" (hard stares and glares) are being passed between your dogs.
5. One of your dogs keeps another dog from moving freely around the house.
6. One of your dogs slinks around the house, avoiding another dog.
7. One dog bullies the other dogs, taking away all their bones and toys.
8. Your dogs exhibit stiff postures around each other.
9. Your dogs growl, snap, show their teeth, or lunge at each other.
10. Lastly, your dogs are fighting with each other.