

Introducing a New Dog To Your Current Dogs

Dogs are social creatures by nature. However, they have their own personalities, likes, dislikes, and insecurities. Just because your new dog is generally “friendly” and had a good meeting with your current pet in a neutral location, doesn’t mean this will continue once you get into your current pet’s territory. Often we want to immediately bring the new dog into the center of our lives so that they feel loved and like a part of the family, However, moving to a new location with a new family and new dogs can be very overwhelming for a dog, especially a rescue dog, and this can lead to them reacting negatively towards your other dog. Your other dog may also be a bit more negative towards this dog than the other meeting as they are intruding into his home. Properly introducing your new pet into your current pet’s territory can make all the difference between successfully integrating your new pet into your home and having altercations and incidents. Some dogs acclimate to a new place and bond with their new packmates quickly. Others need more time. You should be watching how your dogs interact and make decisions to move the process along based on those interactions rather than rushing them into a situation that might result in an incident. Every incident sets the process back and too many incidents can lead to the dogs forming a negative opinion of each other that can be hard to counteract.

Basic Rules for the First 2 Weeks

1. New dogs (ND) should not be left unattended with established dogs (ED).
2. ND and ED should be leashed for the first few days at least so that you can easily separate them if necessary.
3. Behavior and interactions between ND and ED should be monitored at all times. Dogs should be separated if there are signs of tension or overstimulation.
4. ED should not be allowed into ND’s crate or bed and vice versa.
5. ND and ED should be fed in the same room at the same time if possible as this builds pack bonding behavior.
6. ND and ED should take structured walks together twice a day at least. The purpose of these walks is for bond building rather than exercise, so these walks can be short down the street and back type things. These should not replace exercising walks if kept short.

Proper Introductions

1. The first introduction between ND and ED should be outdoors in the yard or driveway. Though this is ED’s territory, it is more neutral than inside the house.
2. After the first introduction, immediately take ND and ED on a short walk together. Then bring them inside and feed them a small meal together. Both dogs should be leashed for this so that you can keep them from interfering with the other dog’s food. This sets a precedent for ND being a part of the pack and routine.
3. All interactions between ND and ED need to be positive. If this means they only interact for a few minutes at a time to sniff each other, then this is all they should get. Frequent, positive interactions, especially in the first few days, are vital to

having a successful integration. If either of the dogs show negativity towards each other, they should be redirected to a different task and/or separated.

4. NEVER punish either dog physically or get harsh with them if they exhibit antisocial behavior! All they will learn from that is that when the other dog is around, you get mad and bad things happen to them. This can cause their view of the other dog to become more and more negative. “Every time that dog shows up Mom/Dad is going to get mad so I have to be ready to fight him off”. Instead, teach a leave it command and have the dog practice some basic skills while the other dog is around so that they learn to focus on you. This way you can reward them when the other dog is around and they will start to associate that other dog’s presence with good things happening.
5. DO NOT FORCE interactions between ND and any member of the family, including the human ones. These are big changes to ND’s life. A new home, a new family, a new canine companion. It is a lot for them to take in. Rescue dogs especially may take time learning to trust and have incidents in their backgrounds that can make the move more difficult. Often times when you meet the dog, they have been with their foster long enough to come out of their shell and are comfortable at the time of meeting. Once you bring them home, it will take them time to go through that process again.
6. Do not let ND have the run of the whole house right away. Confine him to one or a few rooms for the first few days/weeks except for brief tours of the rest of the house so that he isn’t so overwhelmed by all of the new area.
7. Make sure that you prepare a space for ND. This space should be a quiet place he can go to have some time to himself. Coming into a new home with a new family can be overwhelming and allowing the ND to relax and unwind can create a much more positive experience for everyone. Make one of the rooms his “base of operations” where his crate/bed is. He should have frequent breaks from ED in this room so that they have time to get used to each other without being forced to constantly share and interact.
8. Gradually reduce the time ND spends in break time and gradually open up new rooms to ND. This process can go quickly with dogs that “fit right in” to the new house. Some dogs take more time to get used to the new surroundings and family.