

Introducing to Existing Dog(s):



The goal is to build a **RELATIONSHIP** between your existing dog(s) and your new dog, this can take some time depending on the dogs - so be sure to not just throw your dog's together, while sometimes this works out when it doesn't it can be **VERY** hard or impossible to repair the damage of a traumatic introduction period. So, even though it can be exciting to grow your canine family take a deep breath and think **BIG PICTURE** and take it slow! The following suggested exercises are not intended to be done in one sitting and depending on the comfort levels of the dogs could take a few days or several weeks. For more detailed instructions and suggestions on dog introductions ask for our Dog-to-Dog Introductions handout.

- Begin with the dogs separated by a sturdy baby gate or other physical barrier. If you have more than one existing dog, introduce them each separately.
- If you have enough people, have both dogs leashed and kept several feet away from the gate to prevent them from rushing up too quickly. If you don't have another person to hold a leash, leash one dog while the other remains free behind the gate.
- At this distance, play your "find it" game with each dog (if you are working solo, toss treats over the gate to the loose dog while dropping treats on the ground for the leashed dog). This allows the dogs to see each other peripherally but the game prevents either dog from becoming too fixated or excited, it keeps both parties calm and in their thinking brains.
- If both parties remain calm playing "find it" move closer, until the dogs are comfortable sitting close to the gate. Standing at the gate reward first one dog with a hand fed treat and then the other, back and forth.
- While doing this, watch the dogs for signs they want to move closer and meet their new sibling - loose happy wiggly butts, play bows and relaxed movements are all signs of engagement! When both dogs show signs of wanting to be friends you can proceed to introduce them to each other. If possible, start by taking the dogs for a parallel walk, walking on-leash "together" in the same direction, but far enough apart to prevent contact initially before letting them play.

Final Notes



- Continue to use your decompression room for bedtime and down time, while gradually opening up the house 1-2 rooms at a time, growing your dog's world slowly.
- If you have another dog, remember that relationship building is a process, for the first several weeks interactions should be somewhat limited and controlled. Walk the dogs together or provide periods of mutual freedom in the house followed by down time in the decompression room. Continue to reward both dogs for good behavior when they are together and continue to practice exercises such as hand feeding treats to both dogs to build a strong positive association between the dogs.
- If you hit a snag introducing your dog's together or even just introducing the dog to the home, slow the process down and if the problem persists get a professional trainer over to your house to help keep you on track!