

# Integrating a New Dog with an Existing Dog

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Adding a new dog into your household is a very exciting time! Generally, everyone adjusts and your new dog blends well with your existing dog. Sometimes, there may be stress when things don't go as well as expected. There are several things you can do to ease the stress and help the adjustment to go as smoothly as possible.

- It is important to feed your dogs completely separate from each other and pick up the food bowls when the meal is over. Some dogs become possessive over their food and competition may begin. Separate feeding is particularly important so your dogs have an opportunity to establish their hierarchy and form a social bond with each other. Once a hierarchy is established and social bonds are formed, most dogs tend to negotiate their conflict more appropriately.
- You should also keep all toys and chew bones up unless you are able to supervise the dogs to see how they behave in these potentially competitive situations.
- Some dogs are one-dog-wrecking-crews when they are left alone. You should confine your new dog when he is left home without you until you know that his behavior is appropriate.
- Store anything of yours that is of value to you until you know how your dog behaves in the house. There is no reason to lose a valuable collection of antique baseball cards because you didn't think your dog would chew them up!
- Acclimate your new dog to being home without you by leaving him for a few minutes at a time. You should leave, drive around the block, and return home. Do this several times increasing the length of time you are gone each time. He should get used to your coming and going and the most important part is that he will know you always return. This may help if your dog has a little anxiety about being left home without you.
- Supervise your new dog around your children until you feel completely comfortable with everyone's interaction. Don't assume that things will go well until you see it go well for yourself!
- Leash your new dog when introducing him to the household cat to ensure that no chasing takes place. As with children, you should supervise your dog and cat together until you feel completely comfortable with everyone's interaction.
- Don't put your dog in stressful situations until he has fully acclimated and is comfortable. Wait to have the dinner party, hold off on the grooming appointment, and delay the dog park visit. Once he has settled in, he should better be able to handle all those situations.
- Don't allow your dog to have unsupervised access to the back yard until he has settled in and you know how he behaves. Some dogs may become anxious when left alone and escape your yard either by jumping over or digging under the fence or gate. Some dogs also bark and howl when they are left alone and your neighbors may not take kindly to all the noise.

Adding a new dog should be fun and exciting. If you take the time to go slowly and prevent any potential problems, you can create a smoother transition for everyone.