

Introducing Dogs to Dogs



Dog to dog introductions can be tricky. There isn't a defined recipe because each dog and set of dogs are different and may prefer different things. You could be surprised that from the start everything works out perfectly, or it could take time (even a month or two) for everyone to adjust completely, which is more common.

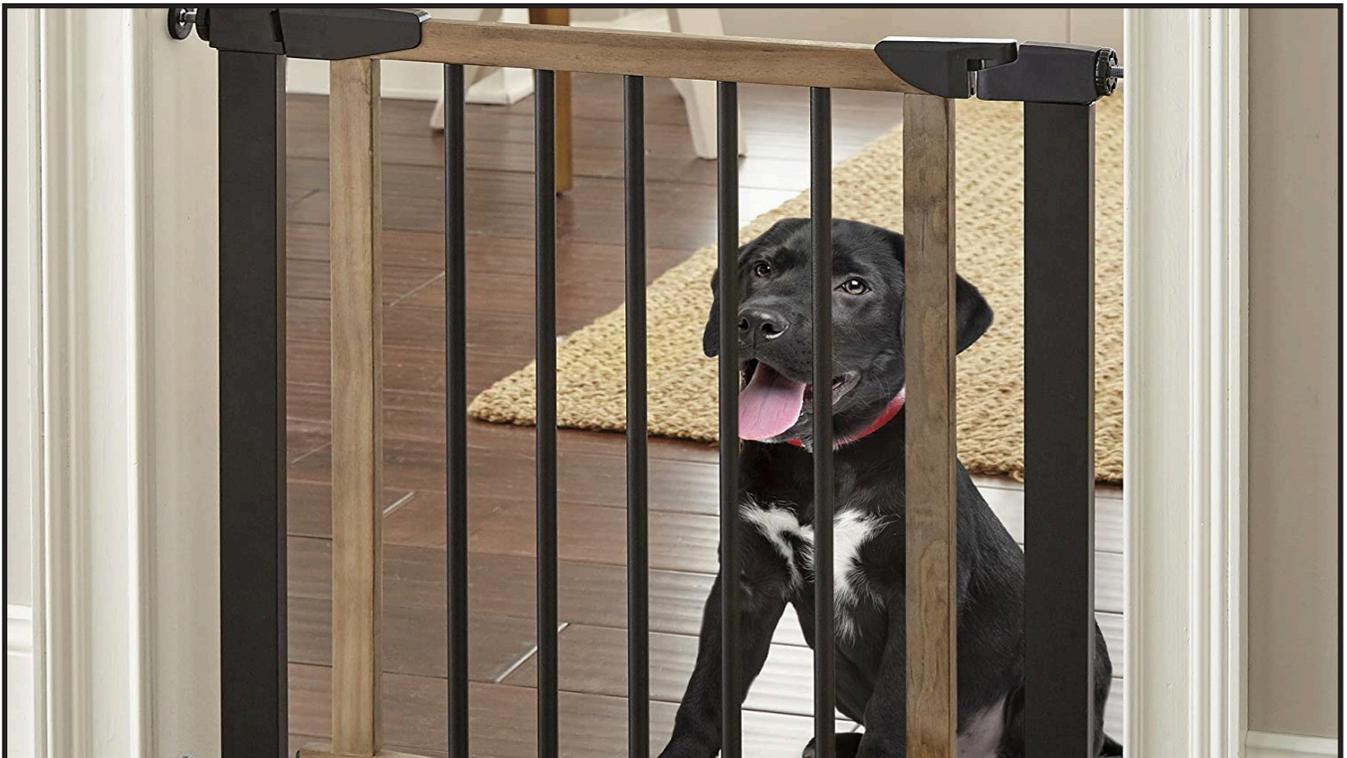
Because we don't know, and we want everyone to feel good and prevent any possible negative experiences, there are a few things that you can do to encourage a good initial meeting



LynchburgHumane
SOCIETY

Before Starting

- Before bringing the dog home or continuing their adjustment in your home, set up good management options using barriers, crates, setting up different rooms for each pet.
- It is beneficial to already have a plan on how to feed separately, and give relaxing breaks from each other.
- Make sure all food is put away and no toys, bones, or valuable chews are out in a shared space.
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- Their first interaction should be in a neutral area (not in the house or a yard the dog very familiar with)



Play Initiation and Dog Corrections

It is a common misconception that dogs who have rough play styles or hump are just being “dominant” - the truth is that could just be their play style and humping is a common form of play initiation in under-socialized dogs.

What are dog corrections?

Dog corrections are the ways dogs correct behavior of other dogs when they are uncomfortable. All dogs, regardless of how social they are, give corrections to other dogs when they feel a boundary is pushed or the other dog is doing something they do not like.

Appropriate corrections include but are not limited to: growling, baring teeth, snapping, jumping towards, and stiffening. This is totally normal and okay to occur during a dog interaction as long as after the correction is given the offending dog gives some space and the correcting dog relaxes when given space.

If more than 3 corrections happen during an interaction, it is a good idea to give both dogs a break from each other to relax and decompress any pent up energy or frustration.

If the corrections are lasting too long, escalating in severity, or involving bites that make contact, you may need help from a trained professional.

Body Language

Comfortable Body Language

- Loose bodied
 - Wiggly
 - Relaxed
 - Play bows
- Taking turns chasing and wrestling

Uncomfortable Body Language

- Baring teeth / Snapping
- Staring out the corner of their eye
 - Stiffening
 - Hackles raised
 - Low tucked tails



How to Start

1. Begin by doing parallel walks (walking on leash in the same direction side by side, but far enough from each other to where they are not interacting) to get them used to another dog in their presence and acclimate to the other's scent.

- If they are barking and reacting towards each other on leash, this is likely due to excitement and frustration, so increase the distance between the two.

2. Once they are relaxed (or at least more relaxed) with the parallel walk, you can let them approach each other.

- The most important part of this portion is to keep the leash of both dogs loose, if they are tight, they will not physically be able to show appropriate dog social cues and may put the tension they are feeling into the meeting.

- A better option for this portion is to let them meet off leash (or with dropped leashes) in an enclosed area or yard.

Keep in mind that some dogs are vocal when they play, so growling, barking, or other noises alone are not cause for concern.

If the Interaction Goes Well

Let them get some energy out by playing and exploring and then bring them inside together. Make sure that they are taking breaks from interacting and playing (even short ones) inside and that they are letting each other relax. If you notice that one is wanting to play more than the other, you may need to put them in separate areas for short periods of time. When in doubt, a break never hurts. As they are behaving how you want with barriers between them and with multiple breaks, you can begin to reduce the barriers and increase the duration that the dogs interact with each other.

Keeping the interactions short at first can be helpful because we don't want to overwhelm anyone and cause a negative interaction that may affect their relationship long term. To reduce competition between the dogs, feed them in separate locations and keep barriers between them when providing them high value resources such as bones or toys.

Once you are 100% comfortable with them together and would bet money that they will listen to each other's corrections and signals, it is okay to start leaving them together when you are not home. Never leave valuable resources (food, treats, bones, toys) out when you are not there. It is usually a good idea to feed dogs separately anyways because it is such an easily avoided point of contention, but introducing toys into the space during relaxed times can be successful, just make sure there are plenty of toys to choose from.

There are also more resources that are available online if needed, Please see the back to see more.

Other Resources

Here are some great resources for these types of introductions and integrating new dogs into the home:

<https://resources.bestfriends.org/article/introducing-dogs-each-other>

<https://www.whole-dog-journal.com/care/proper-dog-to-dog-introductions-in-the-home/>

https://www.whole-dog-journal.com/issues/5_7/features/Multi-Dog-Household-Management_5466-1.html

Additional links (include these if applicable)

Tips for introducing a new dog with different scenarios:

<https://www.whole-dog-journal.com/care/tips-on-adding-a-dog-to-your-household/>

Training dogs to do polite greetings:

<https://www.clickertraining.com/how-to-train-polite-greetings>