

Dog-to-Dog Introductions

Introducing a new dog into a home with a resident dog requires a slow, structured approach to ensure both animals feel safe and comfortable. Here is a step-by-step tutorial:

Phase 1: Preparation (Before the Dogs Meet)

- **Remove "High-Value" Items:** Before bringing the new dog home, pick up anything the resident dog might guard, such as food bowls, bones, chew toys, and even favorite beds.
- **Neutral Territory:** Plan the first meeting for a neutral location away from your home, such as a quiet park or a neighbor's yard, so the resident dog doesn't feel the need to defend their "turf".

Phase 2: The Initial Introduction

- **Parallel Walks:** This is the most recommended starting technique. Have two people walk the dogs on loose leashes at a distance where they can see each other but remain calm.
 - Walk in the same direction, gradually decreasing the distance as both dogs show relaxed body language.
 - This allows them to get used to each other's presence in a non-threatening, forward-moving way.
- **Linear/Follow Walks:** Once they are comfortable walking side-by-side, allow them to follow one another. This lets them catch each other's scent without the confrontation of a head-on approach.
- **Fence Greetings:** If appropriate, you can allow them to sniff through a neutral fence first. This "can see but cannot touch" method provides a safety barrier while you monitor their reactions.

Phase 3: Transitioning to the Home

- **Separate Sanctuaries:** Initially, keep the dogs in separate areas of the home using baby gates or closed doors. This prevents them from feeling overwhelmed and allows them to adjust to the new sounds and smells of the other dog.
- **Scent Swapping:** Exchange bedding or toys between the two dogs so they can become familiar with each other's scent before they have full access to one another.

- **Visual Access with Barriers:** Use baby gates to allow short, supervised visual sessions. Reward both dogs with treats for calm, relaxed behavior while they are looking at each other.

Phase 4: Supervised Interaction

- **Short and Positive:** Keep early face-to-face sessions brief. Use leashes (letting them drag if safe) so you can easily separate them if tensions rise.
- **Management:** Do not leave the dogs alone together until you are entirely confident in their relationship. Use crates or separate rooms when you are away or cannot supervise.
- **Watch Body Language:** Look for relaxed, "wiggly" bodies and soft eyes. If you see signs of high arousal—like stiffening, hard staring, or hair standing up (piloerection)—calmly separate them and give them a break.

Pro Tips for Success

- **Individual Enrichment:** Ensure both dogs still get individual attention, exercise, and [mental stimulation](#) to reduce frustration.
- **Treat and Retreat:** If one dog is nervous, try throwing treats *away* from the other dog. This rewards them for noticing the other dog but gives them the choice to move away and regain their space.
- **Go Slowly:** If at any point the dogs become aggressive or overly fearful, take several steps back in the process and consult a professional if needed