



Introducing New Pets to Resident Pets

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So You Are Bringing Home a New Pet...

DPA recommends “scent before sight, and sight before touch.” Meaning the new pets smell each other’s scent, (either through doors, or swapping blankets/beds), and get used to each others’ scents before seeing each other. Then, they see each other before making physical contact such as through a baby gate, one pet parent holds onto each animal and vice versa.

If you have multiple pets to introduce to the new pet it is important that these steps are followed for each new pet **SEPARATELY**. We do not recommend introducing two dogs or two cats to the new pet collectively together. It is important to focus on each individual relationship.

Finally, always playing it safe within the first few weeks or even months. Never leaving the new pets unattended alone and never sharing bowls/toys/resources initially to avoid resource guarding are key to setting the pets up for success and to avoid conflict.

Dog to Dog Intros

When it comes to introducing a new dog to your dog, a slow and careful introduction process sets everyone up for success. It’s essential to progress at the speed that both pets are comfortable with and to continually monitor them for any signs of fear, anxiety, or stress. The goal is for both pets to have nothing but positive interactions with each other.

We also suggest watching [Rachel at the Shelter’s How to Introduce New Dogs video](#) as it complements our recommendations. Dogs are successfully introduced slowly and carefully. Rushed or improper introductions may result in a dog fight. One of the most common ways people are bitten is when improperly breaking up a dog fight, so careful introductions reduce the chance of injury to both dogs and people in the household. The time it takes for two dogs to be successfully integrated will vary by dog and

by household.

Step 1: Prep Your Home

1. Make a plan with roommates/housemates to completely separate the dogs to start. Make it clear that the dogs must stay separate until told otherwise. They may be able to hear each other, but should not be allowed to see each other or be given access to a shared barrier (gate, door, crate) to start.
2. Prep yourself and your home with the following tools:

Startling/Interrupting Tools	Separation Tools
• Spray bottle of water (nozzle set to stream, not mist) • Shake can (metal can or tin with rocks and/or pennies inside) • Pet Corrector	• Two standard 4' or 6' non-retractable leashes • Door(s) • Crate(s) • Baby gate(s)

3. Establish completely separate spaces for the dogs. Set up a crate for the new dog, and/or a baby gate to put in the doorway of the room where the new dog will reside.
4. The dogs may display some reactivity (whining/barking/growling) when they hear each other in the beginning. Be prepared to redirect them with things they enjoy (treats, toys, affection) when they hear the other dog, so they begin to associate the unknown with something positive.
5. Try to give the dogs equal time with you, but don't feel bad about separating the new member of the home more in the beginning. They could likely use some alone time to decompress from all the stimulus as they acclimate to their new home.
6. Remove all resources (toys, bones, food bowls, etc.) from common areas the dogs will share.
7. Once the house is set up and everyone is on the same page, proceed with Step Two.

Step 2: Tandem Walks

Tandem walks require two handlers. The dogs shouldn't actually meet on leash. The goal of this walk is for the dogs to see each other without a negative response and to wear them out.

1. Grab a roommate, family member, or friend to help take the dogs on a walk.
2. Each handler will walk one dog outside the home, separately to avoid seeing each other during the start of the walk.
3. Give each dog a chance to potty if possible, before allowing them visual access to the other dog.
4. Ideally start with one dog on either side of the street leaving plenty of distance as both dogs continue to walk in the same direction.
5. Slowly move closer to each other if everyone appears comfortable.
 - If the dogs are barking, lunging, growling, or showing lots of interest in one another, move farther apart until the dogs are more calm and maintain this distance for a longer period of time before trying to move closer again.
 - As you move closer together, each person should still maintain enough distance apart so that the dogs cannot access each other on leash.
6. Watch the body language of both dogs. The dogs should remain calm and relaxed, and enjoy the walk.

7. If the tandem walk is successful, return home and proceed to Step Three with your calm, relaxed dogs.

Step 3: Separate in Home

Your new pup needs time to adjust to home life, and your current dog(s) need time to get used to their new family member. Separating your dogs is key to a successful introduction. You may need to separate your new dog using a crate or baby gate more frequently while your pets are still warming up to one another. This is a-okay!

1. Return the dogs to their separate spaces without letting them interact.
 - a. Dogs may be separated using a covered crate and/or baby gate, or in separate rooms
 - b. This allows them to still hear, smell, and/or get used to one another's presence without overwhelming them with more than they are ready for.
2. After the dogs have had a break from one another, allow them to greet through a baby gate, crate, or sniff through a door.
3. If the dogs are reactive--barking, lunging, growling--through the barrier, calmly separate them and continue blocking their view from one another.
4. Repeat Steps Two (Tandem Walks) and Three (Separate in the Home). Don't rush. Every introduction is different and may take days, weeks, or longer.
5. When both dogs show calm behavior near one another, proceed to Step Four.

Step 4: Slow, Controlled Introductions

Dog-dog introductions must be done with two handlers. Remove all toys, treats, and food from the space.

Successful Interactions

- Play between the dogs should be mutual. Although play can be fun, it also gives dogs a chance to communicate serious information like when the other dog is being too rough.
- A comfortable dog will be loose and wiggly, not tense. As long as both dogs are loose and seem to be mutually enjoying themselves, it is not necessary to stop play. Let the dogs play without interruption; sometimes, when humans try to talk dog, we unintentionally start a fight.
- "Normal" play may mean different things for different dogs. Some dogs enjoy less physical play. Other dogs may enjoy tackling, mounting, and rough housing with other dogs. Dogs that enjoy physical play may also use their mouths on other dogs. Vocalizations such as growling and barking often happen during play. *As long as both dogs seem to be enjoying it, it is okay to let play continue.*
- It's perfectly fine if the dogs ignore each other and coexist in the space instead of playing. Some dogs may tolerate another dog in their space but may not feel like playing with it. They should not be forced to play with each other.
- A dog being selective about how it likes to play is a natural part of being a dog. When a dog isn't comfortable or wants to stop the interaction, they should be able to tell the other dog by barking, snapping, or showing teeth. Corrections should be seen as a normal part of social interactions and it is healthy for a dog to tell another dog "no".

Avoiding a Scuffle

- Dogs communicate when they are uncomfortable using combinations of sounds and body language, such as barking, showing teeth, growling, body checking, nipping, and snapping. The

following are signs a dog may be uncomfortable:

- a. Their entire body is tensed and stiff
 - b. They have a stiff high tail
 - c. Their tail is tucked between their legs
 - d. They duck down with their whole body low to the ground (not a play bow)
 - e. They have their ears back and flat against their head
 - f. They continually lick their lips and/or yawn
 - g. They have their hackles up (hair along their spine stands up) for an extended period of time
 - h. They put their head over the other dog's neck
- The goal is to avoid a fight by pinpointing and interrupting actions that may escalate to a scuffle. If a startling tool is required, remember to use your verbal "eh-eh" first, or clapping loudly to interrupt the behavior. The following are situations that may require us to become involved:
 - a. The play is not mutual between the dogs.
 - b. A dog is not correcting or stopping the other dog but looks like it is not enjoying play.
 - c. A dog is giving signals or corrections but the other dog is not listening or respecting the warnings.
 - d. A dog goes overboard with its warning and overcorrects the other dog by loudly barking, growling, and pursuing the other dog.
 - e. Rough, rowdy play is escalating and becoming too high energy between dogs that don't know each other well.
 - f. A dog is trying to make space and move away from another dog that keeps trying to interact and pursue it.
 - g. While a dog is mounting a dog, the dog being mounted is barking, growling, turning their head and trying to mouth the other dog, trying to squeeze out from under the dog, and/or attempting to run away, but not succeeding.

***If a Scuffle Happens**

1. Try not to use your hands or body to separate the dogs.
2. If the dogs are **not** holding on to each other, pick up the leashes dragging on the dogs to pull them away from each other.
3. If the dogs *are* holding on, grab a squirt bottle or shake can. Say a loud verbal correction ("EH EH", "OFF", "OUT", etc.) and then squirt the dog's body or shake the can in the air.
4. If the startling tools fail to separate the dogs, set off Pet Corrector near the dogs.
5. When the dogs let go of each other, use the leash on each dog to pull them apart.
6. Let the dogs calm down for a minute before checking each dog for injuries.
7. If the scuffle was brief, give the dogs some time to decompress before starting again with introductions.

Introducing the Dogs

1. Pick a large, neutral space that is securely fenced in like a backyard or *empty* dog park for the meeting. Make sure to pick up all potential resources (food, toys, etc.).
2. Attach leashes to each dog's collar (or harness).
3. One dog and handler should exit the home first, enter the yard, and walk far from the entrance. The handler should keep hold of their dog's leash.
4. The second dog and handler will then exit the home and enter the yard.
5. The dogs should see one another and then be able to look away or look at their handler before proceeding.
 - a. IF the dogs are barking, growling, lunging, or show a strong amount of interest in each

other, set up a baby gate in the doorway and allow them to sniff through the gate, without any tension on their leashes. Then determine if you feel comfortable continuing. If both dogs can settle and break their focus from each other, and both handlers feel comfortable, allow the inside dog out into the neutral space.

6. When the dogs are calm and have broken their focus from each other, drop the leashes and allow the dogs to meet and interact on their own. Do not force the interaction or hover too close to the dogs crowding their space.
7. Remain neutral, giving them a lot of space and not interacting with either of them, while watching to see how they engage with each other.
8. The dogs should have some time to communicate with one another.
9. If things go poorly but the dogs diffuse on their own (growl/bark/snap at each other and move away), give them a moment to calm down and see if they can coexist in the same space briefly before separating them again.
10. Let them coexist, get a feel for each other, or play on their own.
11. Once the dogs have had a few minutes to interact with each other, and are relaxed, try petting each dog for a few seconds. If either dog seems bothered, stop petting and walk away giving them space to communicate.
12. Make sure the dogs have a few of these brief positive off leash (fenced yard, empty dog park, spacious garage) introductions, ideally 30 min or less, before trying to let them share space indoors.
13. Even as little as a few minutes per interaction is a good starting place towards building a good relationship. It's all about brief positive experiences, especially in the beginning stages.
14. Start removing levels of separation inside the home as you feel comfortable (crating the dogs in the same room covered or not, crate one while the remains on leash, separating with a baby gate, exercise pen, or tie-downs if supervised).
15. Continue separating during feeding time or when the dogs are left alone. Try to avoid any potential for conflict while the dogs establish a solid relationship.
16. After the dogs have had numerous successful interactions, slowly let them spend time free roaming, with leashes dragging, inside the home while supervised.

Step 5: Continued Management

- Some dogs might do great transitioning from outside to in, and quickly move to spending most of their time together.
- Others might have feelings about particular rooms, tight spaces, or stressors (mailman, visitors, dinner time, etc.) in the presence of their new buddy.
- Some dogs might do better at certain times of the day.
- Plan to take things slow and give the dogs plenty of breaks from each other.
- Establishing a routine is an easy way to let dogs know what is expected of them.
- Teaching your dog basic obedience skills (recall, sitting until released, place, polite leash manners, etc.) establishes trust and a stronger bond. A strong bond encourages a dog to listen to your directions.
- Continue to supervise all interactions.
 - Slow down or stop play that is not mutual by using your voice or tools.
 - Interrupt unwanted behavior between the dogs.
- Prevent resource guarding by separating the dogs before giving toys and treats, and distribute attention and affection equally or not at all.
- Understand that fights happen. Make an effort to learn what caused them to prevent the same

fight from happening in the future.

Dog to Cat Intros

When it comes to introducing a cat and dog, a slow and careful introduction process sets everyone up for success. It's essential to progress at the speed that both pets are comfortable with and to continually monitor them for any signs of fear, anxiety, or stress. The goal is for both pets to have nothing but positive interactions with each other.

1. Keep Them Separate When bringing home a new cat, the first step is to establish a safe place, or sanctuary, just for them. This space allows them to become acclimated to their new home before being introduced to the resident pooch. If possible, choose a room the dog doesn't spend much time in (such as a spare bathroom or guest bedroom), as it's best to not disrupt the resident pet's routines as much as possible.

2. Swap Scents and Rotate Pets Through the House: The best way to begin the acclimation process is to rotate their bedding and swapping scents. The goal is for them to have plenty of opportunities to acclimate to each other's smells and noises before ever seeing each other.

It can be helpful to allow the two pets to sniff each other from under the door and have the pets eating their own food on each side of the door. Also, allowing one pet to freely roam the house while the other pet is confined, and then rotate. For instance, let the cat explore the house while the dog is in the backyard. Then keep the cat in a bedroom while the dog has free rein in the rest of the house.

3. Let Them See Each Other Once both pets are relaxed and comfortable hearing and smelling each other, they're ready to begin seeing one another. Use a barrier, such as a tall pet gate, to keep both pets safe.

To create positive associations, pair these sessions with meals, treats, positive reinforcement training, or engaging play. One simple way to do this is by feeding both pets their meals a bit away from the divider. Just stay alert for signs of resource guarding in your dog or cat. While these sessions should be brief at first, time spent near each other can gradually increase as both pets become more comfortable.

4. Make Leashed Introductions Once both pets are comfortable being around each other on either side of a divider, they're ready for their first true introduction. Controlled introductions should start in common areas of the home with the dog on a loose leash.

As the pet parent, it's important to be aware of both your [dog's body language](#) and your cat's body language during these interactions so you can quickly identify any warning signs.

The dog should have a loose body and tail position and easily reorient toward you when called. The cat should have forward-facing ears, a neutral tail position, and a soft gaze with narrow pupils. They should

be allowed to come and go, investigating the dog as they are comfortable.

If you see your dog moving slowly, stiffening, or becoming fixated on the cat, it's time to create more distance or take a break. Similarly, if the cat crouches, freezes, swishes or flicks their tail, pins their ears back, or if their pupils begin to dilate, they are showing signs of stress and need a break from the interaction.

If your dog is barking or lunging at the cat, or if the cat is hissing or growling or their fur begins to stand up, it's best to separate the pets and return to the previous successful step once they've had a chance to relax.

After numerous positive leashed introductions, allow the cat and dog to coexist with the dog dragging the leash. This gives the pets more freedom to interact while maintaining an added safety measure in case they need to be separated promptly.

5. Decrease Supervision When you are confident that the pets are getting along well, slowly allow them to be together with less supervision. To start: Try leaving the room briefly while still being within earshot. As they continue to do well, you can be absent for longer periods of time.

It's important to give the cat elevated surfaces where they can easily seek refuge from the dog, such as cat trees and cat shelves. This will decrease stress and give the cat a safe escape in case of a problematic interaction. **It's recommended to keep pets separated when you are out of the home, even when they are doing well together.**

It's not uncommon for the introduction process to take a couple weeks to a few months, depending on the individual pets. Progress is not always linear, and it's OK to take a step backward at any point if you start to see signs of stress. The safety and well-being of both pets is always the biggest priority, so avoid putting this process on a timeline.

Cat to Cat Intros

As previously mentioned DPA does NOT recommend introducing new cats on Day 1, or sometimes even within the first week or two.

By planning ahead and taking things slowly, your chances of success when introducing cats are much greater. If you rush into things and attempt to "force" a relationship, you might inadvertently sabotage a relationship that could have otherwise worked out. Here are six steps that can help you ensure a successful introduction:

Step One: Prepare a separate room Some cats can be dropped into the middle of a new home and adapt just fine, with everything working out between the kitties. However, such an approach can also end in

disaster, injuries or a failed adoption. Before bringing your new cat home, we recommend that you:

- Find a quiet room in your house (a bedroom or bathroom) where you can keep her safely separated from the resident cat for a few days.
- Make sure it is a room where the resident cat has been, that it can be easily accessed by all human family members for social interactions and playtime, and that it is set up with food, water, litter, toys and soft beds.
- Choose a room that has an inch or two of space under the door for feline introductions.

Step Two: Start by trading scents. Exchange the cats' scents with one another, you will be introducing a very important identification and communication signal right off the bat.

Step Three: Feed them on opposite sides of the door Place both cats' dishes close to the door, on their respective sides. If one of the cats refuses to eat, you can feed them elsewhere, but still place dishes of tuna or some other tasty snack on either side of the door. By having both cats experience something positive (a meal or yummy snack) while they are nearby, they can learn to form positive associations with each other.

- If either cat is growling or hissing at the other through the door, do not put them together anytime soon; take things very slowly and continue feeding this way. If the problems continue for several days, it is likely the match is not going to work out.

Step Four: Exchange scents around the house If both cats are eating well, and appear calm and relaxed on their respective sides of the door, then it's time for the big scent exchange:

- The resident cat should now be confined in the room, while the new cat is allowed to roam the house. Each cat should use the other cat's (scooped!) litter box, food and water dishes, beds and toys, so the only thing being exchanged is the cats themselves.
- Continue to feed both cats close to their respective sides of the door.
- While the new cat is exploring your home, you may want to close bedroom and bathroom doors at first so they do not feel overwhelmed. Over the course of a few days, open a door or two at a time and increase the amount of space the new cat has access to.

If either cat appears stressed, nervous or fearful, you might want to do the exchange described above multiple times, for example:

- The new cat spends a few days in the room, then a few in the house, then back in the room — while the resident cat is in the opposite location. This can help ensure lots of scent exchange and desensitization.

Step Five: Let them make visual contact If everything seems to be going well, and everyone is acting, eating and using the litter box normally, you're doing great! The next step is to open the separating door, but keep a gate of some sort across it so they can see, smell and have contact with each other. The gate should prevent complete access. (A baby gate is perfect, but usually not high enough for cats, so you may need to stack two on top of each other.)

- Continue feeding both cats on their respective sides of the door, and continue switching them back and forth.

Step Six: Allow them to meet If everything seems fine, and everyone is acting, eating and using the litter box normally, then it's time to take down the gates.

- There may be some hissing or swatting, but cats often will work things out by themselves. If there is a fight in which one of the cats is traumatized or injured (and you have followed all of the above steps), then the match will likely not work out.
- If the cats seem to tolerate, ignore, enjoy or interact with each other – that's great news!

****Leaving Cats Alone Together:** It's a good idea to continue to separate the cats at first when you will not be around to supervise them. You want to ensure that you see all their interactions and know exactly what is going on. After you feel that the cats are getting along, you can ease up on this step.

Additional Resources:

- [Introducing New Dogs to a Multi Dog Household](#)
- [Dog-Dog Introductions](#)
- [Dog-Cat Introductions](#)
- [Introducing Cats & Dogs](#)
- [Introducing a Kitten to Adult Cat\(s\)](#)
- [How to Introduce Cats to Each Other](#)

Check out [DPA's Behavior Support Portal](#)

Resources for all New Pets

- [DPA Decompression Document](#)
- [Newly Adopted Pet Resources](#)
- [Introducing New Pets to Existing Pets](#)

Resources for all New Pets

- [Before You Get Your New Pet: Plan for Success](#)

Newly Adopted Dog

- [Bringing Home a New Dog](#)
- [The First Two Weeks](#)
- [Dogs 101](#) and [Puppies 101](#)
- Check out [DPA's Trainer References HERE](#)

Newly Adopted Cat

- [New Cat Checklist](#)

- [Introducing a New Cat to Your Household](#)
- ["Catify" Your Home](#)
- [Cats 101 and Kittens 101](#)

Additional New Dog Resources:

- [What To Do When You Adopt a Fearful Dog](#)
- [Puppy Primer: Start Your New Dog Off Right](#)
- [New Puppy Essentials: Parasite Protection](#)
- [Golden Years: Adopting and Loving a Senior Dog](#)