Introducing Your Dog to New Dogs

Introductions between your new dog and unfamiliar dogs can be fraught with confusion and conflict if not done correctly. The best results come from going slow and creating neutrality between dogs. Some dogs have better social skills than others, and even friendly dogs could agitate another dog with rude behavior.

I strongly do not recommend allowing dogs to randomly meet other dogs in passing on the leash. It is much better to teach your dog to ignore passing dogs on walks and then separately build relationships with new dog friends by following the guidelines below. Quick, passing leashes greetings tend to be tense and have a high risk being unsuccessful thus creating a negative experience for your dog.

- Be sure to review our **Speak Dog!** Canine Body Language guide before introducing dogs.
- Start with familiar dogs. Pick friendly, healthy, easygoing dogs, and introduce one at a time.
- Always ask the guardian of the other dog if it's okay to introduce the dogs and ask them about the history and playstyle of their dog with other dogs to ensure a good match.
- Make sure your dog is wearing a collar or harness and is on a leash held by an adult. Your dog is more likely to stay calm if you are calm.
- Introduce dogs in an area with lots of space, away from their homes (e.g., a few streets away, park space, parking lot)

1. First walk the dogs parallel at a safe distance apart (10-20 feet). As the dogs get used to one another's presence and fully ignore each other, slowly move closer until both are calmly walking near one another.

a. Don't let the dogs rush up to each other. By keeping things slow and controlled, everyone will feel more comfortable.

2. Aggression is a form of communication, and it can be common for a dog to growl when they are establishing boundaries. If the two dogs are showing some signs of intensity towards each other, keep walking forward at the same distance until they settle down. If there's no growling, barking, lunging or showing teeth, let the dogs approach each other to sniff.
3. Move with the dogs as they greet each other. Follow behind your dog, keep the leashes loose to allow your dogs to make choices and don't let leashes tangle.
4. Watch body language. If you're seeing relaxed bodies, loose wagging tails, open mouths, and play bows, let the dogs interact for 5-10 seconds, praising and talking in a nice voice. Call to your dog in an upbeat tone of voice and gently pull them apart and then let them greet again. *Short greetings help keep interactions calm.*
5. If you want the dogs to become playmates, let them play in a fenced area.

a. First, pick up 'valuable' items such as bones, food, balls, and toys. If there's no fear or aggression you can drop their leashes, but keep them attached and dragging for safety.

6. If the dogs play gets too intense, distract them with a loud noise (clapping, whistling or a voice) and separate them. If they resist, spray them with a hose to interrupt any potential conflict.
7. Some dogs are just not tolerant of other dogs. If your dog is aggressive to other dogs, ask for help. Contact your rescue/shelter organization, positive reinforcement trainer, veterinarian or veterinary behaviorist.