

# PLAYMATE SELECTION



## Why should we be selective?

Dogs, like humans, have best friends. More importantly, many dogs lack socialization and don't know proper greeting etiquette. As a result, they can be fearful, reactive, or aggressive. It's up to you to keep your dog safe, as one bad experience as a puppy can shape your dog's perception of other dogs for life. I would not introduce my puppy to the dog on the left.

## Here's how to select a playmate:

### 🐾 Ask the owner about their dog's socialization history:

- How old is your dog? After 5, many dogs have little interest in playing.
- How many dogs has your dog met?
- When was the last time your dog played with another dog?

### 🐾 Observe dog body language:

- Use the [Stress Escalation Ladder](#), [Fear Posture Poster](#) and [Playmate Assessment](#) documents to familiarize yourself with dog body language.
- Assess your dog's body language too and don't force your dog into a meeting.
- Avoid dogs that are still/stiff with a closed mouth and wide or hard eyes.
- Consider dogs with a lot of paw movement, have open mouths and soft eyes.
- Good history is more important than your novice assessment of body language.

### 🐾 Size, age and play style:

- Many dogs feel more comfortable playing with dogs their size or smaller.
- Your puppy should meet puppies (< 2 yo), and adults with a friendly history.
- If your dog is overly aroused, create distance by moving further away from the source of arousal. You may have to start in a larger area, like a park.

### 🐾 General tips:

- Off leash greetings are better than on leash greetings.
- Keep the leash loose for on-leash greetings and stick with dogs you know.
- Don't hover and show concern during the meeting.
- Avoid meeting in dark or cramped areas like hallways and stair landings.