

DOG INTRODUCTIONS



Introductions Can be Intimidating for Dogs and Owners

Dog introductions don't always go so well, but understanding dog body language, taking into account the history of both dogs, and a few tips can make a big difference toward a successful outcome.

Avoiding tight leashes as seen in the picture on the left is one example of setting you and your dog up for a successful outcome. Let's look at a few more good practices for introductions.

Know the Dog:

- A positive introduction is far more likely if the dogs have had successful greetings in their past.
- Select a dog in the same age range as your dog for its first few introductions. 0 – 2, 3 – 5, 6+
- Choose a dog of similar size.
- Ask the owner about the play style and history of their dog, and know your own dog's as well.
- It's best to proceed with a professional if there is bite history or if you're just really anxious.

Observe Body Language:

- Use the [Stress Escalation Ladder](#), so you know how to recognize stress or anxiety in both dogs.
- The [Fear Posture Poster](#) tells us some dogs require special care during introductions, or that maybe they're happier not meeting other dogs all together.
- This [Playmate Assessment](#) gives us a visual of what to look for in both dogs.

Start with a Parallel Walk:

- Walk parallel, 20 feet apart from each other and decrease the distance over a span of 20 minutes.
- Reward calm behavior with praise and treats.
- Only decrease the gap when the leash is loose and go more than 20 minutes if needed.

Additional tips for success:

- Meet just one dog at a time for the first few introductions. Don't start at the dog park.
- Off leash greetings are better than on leash greetings.
- **Keep the leash loose** for on-leash greetings.
- Don't hover and show concern during the meeting. Smile, stay calm and relaxed. Your dog reads you.
- Start on neutral ground away from your home.
- Avoid giving treats or affection, on or off leash. Give them immediately after, separating.
- Don't feel obligated to meet every dog you see, especially if they're not showing nice body language.