

Boroughbred Behavior Resources



Dog to Dog Introductions

Adding another canine companion to your household can be an exciting time! During the introductory period between resident dogs, it is important to remain patient and observant. A slow, steady pace where both dogs can interact at their own comfort level is what will best set them up for success. Keep in mind that interactions should never be rushed or continued if either appears uncomfortable!

- **Be prepared to provide enough space to keep dogs separate as long as needed.** When introducing a new dog into the home, having a separate space for each dog is important. This will allow each dog time to decompress between introductions while having a space to enjoy their own treats, toys, and time separately. Separate rooms, gates, and crates can be utilized
- **Utilize pair walks and short introductions.** “Pair walking” is a commonly heard phrase when it comes to introducing dogs to one another. With the assistance of a friend or family member, both dogs are walked a safe distance apart while being allowed to approach, sniff, and investigate one another at a pace comfortable for each individual. Pair walks are often most successful when conducted in open outdoor spaces, while both handlers pay close attention to the body language and comfort level of each dog.
- **Keep initial introductions short and sweet!** During initial greetings, allow each dog to make the choice to approach and sniff one another. Initial greetings can be kept very short (even from one to a few minutes!) to allow both dogs to exchange greetings while ending on a positive note. If one dog appears hesitant or uncomfortable, it is best to end the interaction early, while slowing down the pace of future introductions.
- **Hey! I’m not ready to play!** One common factor that requires troubleshooting can be varying energy levels between dogs. Often times, you may see one dog more comfortable and eager to play with their new acquaintance, even if the other dog isn’t quite ready. Energetic dogs may benefit from an initial walk or play session with their human to help them burn off some extra energy before they first meet their new canine companion.
- **Pay close attention to body language.** When uncomfortable, dogs can even display subtle signals that can be easy to miss! If either dog appears tense, or attempts to move away, the introduction should be ended before they have a chance to escalate to higher level warning signals (snapping, growling, lunges). If either dog begins to display these signals, it is best to keep both dogs completely separate and contact a professional before attempting future introductions. (MYTH: While you may have heard of people letting dogs ‘work things out’ themselves, this is not an effective method of introducing dogs. Observing body language, comfort level, and respecting dogs’ need for space can lead to more overall successful and healthy interactions).
- **Keep resources out of the picture.** Food, treats, and novel toy items should be enjoyed separately by both dogs. These types of items are often very valuable to dogs, and it is understandable if they’d rather not share. While it can be tempting to shower both dogs with attention, hugs, and petting during this period, even human attention can be considered a valuable resource and should be offered separately! Separate feedings and resources should continue even after both dogs have become well acclimated to one another. Even the closest of human siblings may digress to sharing their cookies with each other!
- **Remain patient.** Introductions between dogs truly succeed best when more time is allotted. While your newly adopted dog is acclimating to their new home and companions (human and non-human), your resident dog will also appreciate time to slowly acclimate to having another dog in their space. Always reach out to a behavior professional that uses positive reinforcement methods of training with any questions.