



# The Best Way to Introduce a Second Dog Into Your Pack

from *RescueDogs 101.com*

**So you're thinking about adopting a second dog?** Do you have a vision that both dogs will be best friends, play and run around the backyard together, then snuggle on the dog bed together at the end of the day? We have almost always had two dogs at the same time in our family.

**But wait, how do you know they'll be best friends?** Are you friends with everyone you meet? Most of us have people we are acquaintances with because we have to be, then we have a small group of close friends that we go out and have fun together.

Don't expect your dog to love every dog just because you do. And don't be disappointed if your current and a newly adopted dog don't hit it off right away. It's okay for them to just coexist, they don't need to snuggle and be best buds just because you want them to.

Just as a side note, I am going to refer to your current dog has HE or HIM and your new dog as SHE or HER, just to try and make things less confusing.

## Prepare for Adopting a Second Dog

**Step 1:**  
**Start off by selecting the right dog to be his companion**

Think about your current dog's personality. Try to find a new dog to adopt that will compliment or match your current dog's energy and personality traits.

Is your dog fearful or lack confidence? A perfect companion may be a confident dog to help teach him to become more confident in himself.

Is he a senior or low-energy dog? Then bringing in a puppy or high-energy dog may just annoy him. Puppies like to play, bite, and crawl over and will not leave your adult dog alone. Consider adopting a 3-5-year-old dog or even another senior dog.

If your dog has any behavior issues, please ask yourself, "should I get another dog"? Those bad behaviors are only going to get worse when getting a second dog.

Also, consider gender and size.

Opposite sex may get along better than same sex. In general, I recommend adopting opposite sexed dogs. When that is not possible, the second best option is to have two males. Two females are the most likely to have issues.

Some items I highly recommend purchasing before bringing home your new dog are a crate, a second leash (leather is my favorite), his own food and water bowls, and his own dog bed.

## Bringing Home Another Dog: Day 1

**Step 2: Keep the dogs separate**

There are certain steps to take when introducing a new dog to your pack. These steps are very important to keep the balance in your house.

I learned about this process when we first started fostering. The rescue insists that we keep our foster dogs and resident dogs separate for a minimum of 24 hours. I'll be honest, when I first heard this I thought they were crazy. How was I going to possibly keep our dogs separate for an entire day! But they are right; it really works and creates a much smoother transition.

I've personally gone through these steps many times. Not only with my own dogs, but every single time we bring in a foster dog. It works, as hard as it may seem, these steps help create a calm and balanced transition.

Even the easiest, happy dogs can get stressed when another dog enters his home. It's only 24 hours... one day of separation that can change the relationship of your dogs forever.

### **Step 3: Bringing the new dog inside the house.**

Do not allow the new dog to run loose in the house yet. Keep her on a leash, in fact, I recommend keeping her on a leash for several days until you get to know her behavior inside the house.

Use a bedroom or a baby gate to separate an area in your home for the new dog to relax and adjust to his new surroundings.

Keep this separation for 24-48 hours, depending on the dogs. If they seem to be calm and both dogs are easy going, then 24 hours is more than enough.

Remember, your newly adopted dog is undergoing a lot of new things and can be easily stressed out. If your resident dog won't give her space, then consider a bigger separation.

## **Day 2 or 3 with Your Dogs**

### **Step 4: The first meeting**

After the 24-48 hour separation period and both dogs are calm you can start the introduction stage. You need someone to help you with this step.

Never introduce your new dog inside your house.

If you have more than two dogs, introduce one dog at a time. Starting with the calmest and easy-going dog first.

Take both dogs for a long walk. The resident dog in front with you, the newly adopted dog behind with your helper (in a single file, not side-by-side yet).

Walk parallel to each other about 10 feet away, slowly working your way closer together.

After a good long walk, and both dogs seem calm, allow them to sniff each other's rears (it's a dog thing).

Watch the dog's body language, showing of teeth, growling, stiff erect tail, stiff body stance, ears back, or raised hackles. If any of these occur, give a firm NO, and continue walking. Do not allow this to escalate, as soon as you see ANY of those signs, separate the dogs and start to walk again.

Keep these first interactions short and sweet. Don't overwhelm either dog with too much sniffing. Once they have a minute to check each other out, start walking again. Repeat several times until everyone is calm.

Once this meeting is successful you may go on to the next step of bringing the dogs inside the house. The resident dog should be allowed to enter the home first, then allow him to welcome the new dog inside.

### **Step 5: Giving the new dog more space**

You can take down the baby gate now and give your new dog a little more freedom. I still recommend restricting one area or floor of your home, in fact, I recommend this for up to a week or more.

If you have a fenced backyard, then allow the dogs to run around free outside together. Keep these sessions short, again not to overwhelm either dog. Allow both dogs to come inside and investigate each other.

Never leave the two dogs alone. If you cannot closely supervise, then put them in their crates or separate rooms.

### **Step 6: Resource Guarding**

If your dog has never had another dog in the house, you may not know if he has resource guarding issues.

Resource guarding can be guarding of people, food, toys, dog bed or any object the dog feels it needs to claim. You need to be super-aware of the signs, and if you've never witnessed it before it may catch you off guard at first.

Watch for a showing of teeth, growling, stiff erect tail, stiff body stance, ears back, whale eyes or raised hackles. This is a time you really need to learn your dogs body language.

If you have a resource guarder, then you will need to be super vigilant on feeding time, bones, toys, dog beds, or whatever he likes to guard. Even if you don't think either dog is going to resource guard, I still suggest having separate feeding areas.

## **Day 4 and Beyond with Two Dogs in Your Pack**

### **Step 7: Continue taking it slow**

Take a lot of long walks together as a pack. Keep both dogs tired by giving them more than enough exercise. A bored dog equals trouble. Continue being super aware for several weeks or even months, depending on the dogs personality and temperament.

Watch for any signs of stress in either dog. If either dog gets overwhelmed, reduce the time they have together and slow it down even more.

### **Why is it so important to slowly introduce the dogs?**

A newly adopted dog is under a tremendous amount of stress. The resident dog is wondering who the heck this new dog is, and why she is in his territory.

Mix these feelings together and you will get a dogfight. Not because either dog is aggressive, but because it takes time to unwind and to help both dogs understand the situation.

### **Is it better to have two dogs?**

Having two dogs is better for our family, but maybe not for yours. Consider everything that goes into owning two dogs: including picking up more dog poop, more dog hair, more training, and more expensive vet bills. Is your current dog really wanting a companion or is all about you?