



How to Introduce Dogs to Dogs

Tips from H.O.P.E. Animal Rescue

Bringing home a new dog is exciting, but introductions matter! Dogs communicate through body language, and a thoughtful first meeting sets the stage for a positive relationship.

1. Choose a Neutral Location

- Meet in a place that's new to both dogs (like a park or walking path).
- Each dog should be on a leash and handled by a separate person.
- Avoid starting in your home or yard, where your resident dog may feel protective.
- If you have multiple resident dogs, introduce them **one at a time**. Two or more may overwhelm the newcomer.

2. Use Positive Reinforcement

- Keep leashes loose to reduce tension.
- Let sniffing happen naturally—it's normal greeting behavior.
 - **⚠ Face-to-face sniffing can feel overwhelming. Instead, allow each dog to sniff where the other has been** (like grass or a tree) before greeting directly.
- A good strategy: **take turns following** so they can get to know each other's scent at a comfortable distance.
- Speak in a calm, cheerful tone.
- Reward both dogs with treats for good behavior or following simple commands.
- Walk together so they can interact in a relaxed, side-by-side way.

3. Watch Body Language

- **✓** Signs things are going well: **play bows, loose bodies, wagging tails**.
- **⚠ Warning signs: stiff posture, raised hackles, teeth showing, growling.**
- If tension rises, calmly redirect both dogs with treats, toys, or a short break.
- Try again later—keep sessions short and positive.

Key Takeaway

Go slow, stay positive, and let the dogs set the pace. With patience, you'll help build trust and set the foundation for a lasting friendship.