

Dogs are social animals, but that doesn't mean they are ready to immediately accept unfamiliar dogs. Taking the following steps gives dogs the best chance to make a good first impression!

If you start to see tense body language, growling, or other concerning behaviors, STOP and go back to the previous step. Some dogs may take several introductions before they are comfortable. *For the best results, let the dogs set the pace!*



STEP 1: PARALLEL WALKING

Take the dogs for a short walk. You don't have to go far, just until you see both dogs are calmer. If all is going well, take both dogs into a secure area, like your back yard.

STEP 2: CIRCLE AND SNIFF

With the dogs still on leash, let them approach and sniff. This allows the dogs a chance to check each other out again. Stay on the outside of the dogs so the leashes don't tangle. If you see signs of trouble, back up, giving the dogs more space.

STEP 3: DROP THE LEASHES

If all is going well, drop the leashes and give the dogs a chance to move freely. They may not play or interact right away. Like any new relationship, it can take a little time to warm up.

STEP 4: GO INSIDE

Pick up any bones or high-value items before bringing the dogs inside. At this stage, you can put the dogs back on leash or even separate them with crates/baby gates/pens and give them each a chew or stuffed Kong™ to relax with.

MOVING FORWARD: GIVE THEM THEIR OWN SPACE

For the first few weeks, be sure to feed the dogs in separate areas, so they can each relax while eating. They will benefit from having one-on-one time with you. A great way to do this is to give one dog a stuffed Kong, while the other gets time with you, then switch!

DANGER ZONES

It's one thing to have an overnight guest, but they can certainly overstay their welcome! It can be the same for dogs, so keep an eye on them over the first few days—especially in the “danger zones” like kitchens, feeding areas, and beds/furniture, and when sharing the affections of mom or dad.

Watch the video in our Behavior Resource Library at sspca.org/behavior-training-videos