

## Step 1. Prep Your Home

1. Make a plan with roommates/housemates to completely separate the dogs to start. Make it clear that the dogs must stay separate until told otherwise. They may be able to hear each other, but should not be allowed to see each other or be given access to a shared barrier (gate, door, crate) to start.
2. Prep yourself and your home with the following tools:

### Aversive Tools

- Spray bottle of water (nozzle set to stream, not mist)
- Shake can (metal can or altoid tin with rocks and/or pennies inside)
- [Pet Corrector](#)

### Separation Tools

- Two standard 4' or 6' non-retractable leashes
- Door(s)
- Crate(s)
- Baby gate(s)

3. Establish completely separate spaces for the dogs. Set up a crate for the new dog, and/or a baby gate to put in the doorway of the room where the new dog will reside.
4. The dogs may display some reactivity (whining/barking/growling) when they hear each other in the beginning. Be prepared to redirect them with things they enjoy (treats, toys, affection) when they hear the other dog, so they begin to associate the unknown with something positive.
5. Try to give the dogs equal time with you, but don't feel bad about separating the new member of the home more in the beginning. They could likely use some alone time to decompress from all the stimulus as they acclimate to their new home.
6. Remove all resources (toys, bones, food bowls, etc.) from common areas the dogs will share.
7. Once the house is set up and everyone is on the same page, proceed with Step Two.

## Step Two: Tandem Walks

Tandem walks require two handlers. The dogs shouldn't actually meet on leash. The goal of this walk is for the dogs to see each other without a negative response and to wear them out.

1. Grab a roommate, family member, or friend to help take the dogs on a walk.
2. Each handler will walk one dog outside the home, separately to avoid seeing each other during the start of the walk.
3. Give each dog a chance to potty if possible, before allowing them visual access to the other dog.
4. Ideally start with one dog on either side of the street leaving plenty of distance as both dogs continue to walk in the same direction.
5. Slowly move closer to each other if everyone appears comfortable.
  - If the dogs are barking, lunging, growling, or showing lots of interest in one another, move farther apart until the dogs are more calm and maintain this distance for a longer period of time before trying to move closer again.
  - As you move closer together, each person should still maintain enough distance apart so that the dogs cannot access each other on leash.
6. Watch the body language of both dogs. The dogs should remain calm and relaxed, and enjoy the walk.

7. If the tandem walk is successful, return home and proceed to Step Three with your calm, relaxed dogs.

### **Step Three: Separate in Home**

Your new pup needs time to adjust to home life, and your current dog(s) need time to get used to their new family member. Separating your dogs is key to a successful introduction. You may need to separate your new dog using a crate or baby gate more frequently while your pets are still warming up to one another. This is a-okay!

1. Return the dogs to their separate spaces without letting them interact.
  - a. Dogs may be separated using a covered crate and/or baby gate, or in separate rooms
  - b. This allows them to still hear, smell, and/or get used to one another's presence without overwhelming them with more than they are ready for.
2. After the dogs have had a break from one another, allow them to greet through a baby gate, crate, or sniff through a door.
3. If the dogs are reactive--barking, lunging, growling--through the barrier, calmly separate them and continue blocking their view from one another.
4. Repeat Steps Two (Tandem Walks) and Three (Separate in the Home). Don't rush. Every introduction is different and may take days, weeks, or longer.
5. When both dogs show calm behavior near one another, proceed to Step Four.

### **Step Four: Slow, Controlled Introductions**

Dog-dog introductions must be done with two handlers. Before your introductions, have all aversive tools, including a squirt bottle, shake can, and Pet Corrector, on you or within the area where the dogs will be meeting. Remove all toys, treats, and food from the space.

#### **Why Use Aversive Tools?**

- Aversive tools are a temporary measure to get a dog's attention to interrupt unwanted behaviors before they result in a fight.
- Aversive tools correct unwanted behavior.
  - Aversive tools help communicate with dogs that aren't social enough to read or understand another dog's social cues.
  - Aversive tools are a way to speak for a dog that is uncomfortable or doesn't know how to correct another dog and to slow down play.

#### **Correct Use of Aversive Tools**

- Always start with a verbal correction.
  - Use a verbal marker, such as "eh-eh", before spraying the squirt bottle or shaking the shake can to correct the dog. Ideally, with time, a verbal correction by itself will make the dog think, "I know what's coming when I hear 'eh-eh', so I'm going to stop before I am squirted or they make that noise with the shake can."
- Aversive tools should not cause the dog pain.
- Start with the smallest correction; one spray or a light shake.
  - Starting small allows us to increase the intensity if needed.

- The shake or spray should interrupt the dog's behavior and get the dog's attention so you are then able to give them information.
- Pet Corrector should ONLY be used when other aversive tools fail to interrupt the dogs, and they are escalating into a scuffle\*.

### **Selecting a Useful Aversive Tool**

- Selecting the best tool will take time and practice.
  - If the dog tries to play with the aversive by biting at the water or trying to grab the shake can in a playful manner, choose a different one.
  - When the aversive is a game, it no longer becomes a corrective tool.

### **Successful interactions**

- Play between the dogs should be mutual. Although play can be fun, it also gives dogs a chance to communicate serious information like when the other dog is being too rough.
- A comfortable dog will be loose and wiggly, not tense. As long as both dogs are loose and seem to be mutually enjoying themselves, it is not necessary to stop play. Let the dogs play without interruption; sometimes, when humans try to talk dog, we unintentionally start a fight.
- "Normal" play may mean different things for different dogs. Some dogs enjoy less physical play. Other dogs may enjoy tackling, mounting, and rough housing with other dogs. Dogs that enjoy physical play may also use their mouths on other dogs. Vocalizations such as growling and barking often happen during play. *As long as both dogs seem to be enjoying it, it is okay to let play continue.*
- It's perfectly fine if the dogs ignore each other and coexist in the space instead of playing. Some dogs may tolerate another dog in their space but may not feel like playing with it. They should not be forced to play with each other.
- A dog being selective about how it likes to play is a natural part of being a dog. When a dog isn't comfortable or wants to stop the interaction, they should be able to tell the other dog by barking, snapping, or showing teeth. Corrections should be seen as a normal part of social interactions and it is healthy for a dog to tell another dog "no".

### **Avoiding a scuffle**

- Dogs communicate when they are uncomfortable using combinations of sounds and body language, such as barking, showing teeth, growling, body checking, nipping, and snapping. The following are signs a dog may be uncomfortable:
  - a. Their entire body is tensed and stiff
  - b. They have a stiff high tail
  - c. Their tail is tucked between their legs
  - d. They duck down with their whole body low to the ground (not a play bow)
  - e. They have their ears back and flat against their head
  - f. They continually licks their lips and/or yawn
  - g. They have their hackles up (hair along their spine stands up) for an extended period of time
  - h. They put their head over the other dog's neck
- The goal is to avoid a fight by pinpointing and interrupting actions that may escalate to a scuffle. If an aversive tool is required, remember to use your verbal "eh-eh" first and start with the smallest correction. The following are situations that may require us to become involved:
  - a. The play is not mutual between the dogs.

- b. A dog is not correcting or stopping the other dog but looks like it is not enjoying play.
- c. A dog is giving signals or corrections but the other dog is not listening or respecting the warnings.
- d. A dog goes overboard with its warning and overcorrects the other dog by loudly barking, growling, and pursuing the other dog.
- e. Rough, rowdy play is escalating and becoming too high energy between dogs that don't know each other well.
- f. A dog is trying to make space and move away from another dog that keeps trying to interact and pursue it.
- g. While a dog is mounting a dog, the dog being mounted is barking, growling, turning their head and trying to mouth the other dog, trying to squeeze out from under the dog, and/ or attempting to run away, but not succeeding.

### **\*If a Scuffle Happens**

1. Try not to use your hands or body to separate the dogs.
2. If the dogs are **not** holding on to each other, pick up the leashes dragging on the dogs to pull them away from each other.
3. If the dogs *are* holding on, grab a squirt bottle or shake can. Say a loud verbal correction ("EH EH", "OFF", "OUT", etc.) and then squirt the dog's body or shake the can in the air.
4. If the aversive tools fail to separate the dogs, set off Pet Corrector near the dogs.
5. When the dogs let go of each other, use the leash on each dog to pull them apart.
6. Let the dogs calm down for a minute before checking each dog for injuries.

### **Introducing the dogs**

1. Pick a large, neutral space that is securely fenced in like a backyard or *empty* dog park for the meeting. Make sure to pick up all potential resources (food, toys, etc.).
2. Attach leashes to each dog's collar (or harness if they can't wear a collar for medical reasons).
3. One dog and handler should exit the home first, enter the yard, and walk far from the entrance. The handler should keep hold of their dog's leash.
4. The second dog and handler will then exit the home and enter the yard.
5. The dogs should see one another and then be able to look away or look at their handler before proceeding.
  - a. IF the dogs are barking, growling, lunging, or show a strong amount of interest in each other, set up a baby gate in the doorway and allow them to sniff through the gate, without any tension on their leashes. Then determine if you feel comfortable continuing. If both dogs can settle and break their focus from each other, and both handlers feel comfortable, allow the inside dog out into the neutral space.
6. When the dogs are calm and have broken their focus from each other, drop the leashes and allow the dogs to meet and interact on their own. Do not force the interaction or hover too close to the dogs crowding their space.
7. Remain neutral, giving them a lot of space and not interacting with either of them, while watching to see how they engage with each other.
8. The dogs should have some time to communicate with one another.

9. If things go poorly but the dogs diffuse on their own (growl/bark/snap at each other and move away), give them a moment to calm down and see if they can coexist in the same space briefly before separating them again.
10. Let them coexist, get a feel for each other, or play on their own.
11. Once the dogs have had a few minutes to interact with each other, and are relaxed, try petting each dog for a few seconds. If either dog seems bothered, stop petting and walk away giving them space to communicate.
12. Make sure the dogs have a few of these brief positive off leash (fenced yard, empty dog park, spacious garage) introductions, ideally 30 min or less, before trying to let them share space indoors.
13. Even as little as a few minutes per interaction is a good starting place towards building a good relationship. It's all about brief positive experiences, especially in the beginning stages.
14. Start removing levels of separation inside the home as you feel comfortable (crating the dogs in the same room covered or not, crate one while the remains on leash, separating with a baby gate, exercise pen, or tie-downs if supervised).
15. Continue separating during feeding time or when the dogs are left alone. Try to avoid any potential for conflict while the dogs establish a solid relationship.
16. After the dogs have had numerous successful interactions, slowly let them spend time free roaming, with leashes dragging, inside the home while supervised.

### **Step Five: Continued Management**

- Some dogs might do great transitioning from outside to in, and quickly move to spending most of their time together.
- Others might have feelings about particular rooms, tight spaces, or stressors (mailman, visitors, dinner time, etc.) in the presence of their new buddy.
- Some dogs might do better at certain times of the day.
- Plan to take things slow and give the dogs plenty of breaks from each other.
- Establishing a routine is an easy way to let dogs know what is expected of them.
- Teaching your dog basic obedience skills (recall, sitting until released, place, polite leash manners, etc.) establishes trust and a stronger bond. A strong bond encourages a dog to listen to your directions and corrections.
- Continue to supervise all interactions.
  - Slow down or stop play that is not mutual by using your voice or tools.
  - Interrupt unwanted behavior between the dogs.
- Prevent resource guarding by separating the dogs before giving toys and treats, and distribute attention and affection equally or not at all.
- Understand that fights happen. Make an effort to learn what caused them to prevent the same fight from happening in the future.