

# INTRODUCING DOGS AT HOME

**Before bringing a second dog home, assess whether or not this will enrich your current dog's life. Your dog may be a good candidate for having a "roommate," if:**

- ▶ Your dog has successfully shared space with (lived with) other dogs, in the past.
- ▶ Your dog is generally social and friendly with other dogs.
- ▶ You have had your dog for longer than 4-6 weeks, and he is acclimated, comfortable and relaxed at home.
- ▶ Your dog does not have any current behavior issues that may be exacerbated by a second dog, including: resource guarding, poor impulse control or fearful behavior.
- ▶ Your dog does not guard resources (food, bones, treats, toys, beds, people, etc.) from other dogs by tensing, freezing, growling or snapping.
- ▶ Your dog shows guarding behaviors, but to a degree that is preventable and easily managed.

## INTRO STEPS

- Begin with both dogs leashed, with separate handlers in a "neutral" space such as a walk in the neighborhood.
- Find a comfortable distance between both dogs (roughly 25-30 feet), where they can observe one another without becoming reactive and/or aren't pulling together to greet.
- Go for a walk! While still maintaining a distance, take turns letting one dog trail the other to gather information (smells from the scent glands between paw pads left on the ground or excrement).
- When both dogs appear relaxed and comfortable or are occupying themselves by sniffing around, you may begin to close distance slowly, roughly 5 feet at a time.
- Each time you close distance, wait for your dogs to "relax" again.
- Once you are able to walk within 15 feet of each other, with both dogs appearing relaxed and comfortable, you may be ready to have them meet.
- Allow the dogs to approach one another with handlers making an effort to move with the dogs in an "arc" or U-shape to avoid approaching directly or in a straight line.



Observe your dog's body language while approaching for **red**, **yellow** and **green** signals.

- Hard, focused eye contact with lip licking.
- Growling and exposing teeth.
- Body weight shifted forward with obvious muscle tension.

- Hair raised on the back and shoulders.
- Brief “freezing” paired with hard, focused eye contact and lip licking.
- Hovering head over shoulders of other dog.

- Soft, comfortable eye contact and an open mouth.
- Wide and “loose” tails wags.
- Looking away and breaking eye contact.

- If your dogs appear tense, frustrated or become reactive with **red** or **yellow** signals, move apart quickly in opposing directions calling your dog in a cheerful voice and/or move behind a visual barrier (block your dog's view). Calm your dog by having them do something else for a bit, such as smelling around in a new area or eating treats off the ground, and then start over.
- If your dogs are greeting with **green** and **yellow** signals or are exchanging play gestures (bowing, mirroring each other, pausing with open mouths, pawing), move to a private, contained space where you can allow your dogs to engage in play with their leashes on (allow light nylon leashes to drag from their collars, so each handler can easily grab a leash to separate the dogs if necessary).
- If you are unsure of whether or not your dogs are both actively engaged in play, you can gently pick up the leashes, guiding the dogs apart in opposite directions. Drop the leash of the least active play participant, and wait to see if this dog approaches and engages the second dog again.

### **NOTE ON REACTIVE DOGS:**

If you have a dog that has a known history of reactivity on-leash, however greets appropriately and fairs well with other dogs off-leash, you should consider modifying your introduction. Good options for these dogs may include a quick leashed intro or an intro with both dogs dragging light leashes and tools to interrupt escalating play or disagreements (a hose, citronella or air horn).

### **A FINAL NOTE:**

Remember to keep resources (food, bones, treats, toys, beds, people, etc.) separate for both dogs in your home for a minimum of a week. In general, it is good practice to always offer food items or items containing food in completely separate spaces as a preventative measure.



**Contact our Behavior Helpline for more information.**

619-299-7012, ext. 2244 • [behavior@sdhumane.org](mailto:behavior@sdhumane.org)