

Introducing a Puppy to an Adult Dog



Before introducing a puppy to an adult dog, it is important to remember that the energy and exaggerated movements of a puppy can be overwhelming to mature dogs who are three years of age or older. (This is why puppies often prefer playing with young dogs or other puppies.)

In response to puppies, adult dogs tend to fall into one of these categories:

- Naturally tolerant of puppy exuberance and willing to put up with a lot of puppy antics
- Tolerant to a point then giving appropriate corrections and/or walking away
- Intolerant and/or aggressive towards puppies

If you are unsure about how your dog will react to a young pup, go slow with introductions and be sure to make the interaction a positive experience for both dogs.

Prepare for the Introduction:

- Before the dogs meet, rub a towel on the puppy and allow your adult dog to sniff the towel. This will allow your adult dog to become used to the scent of a new pup in the house.
- Place the puppy-scented towel under your adult dog's food bowl as he eats in order to create a positive association with the new puppy.
- Create a safe place for your adult dog where he can go and be completely undisturbed by the puppy.



Go on a Walk:

A walk can be the most neutral way to introduce dogs; it offers more open space than a house, which can help alleviate tension, and keeps both dogs distracted and less focused on each other. The dogs are also moving parallel to each other in the same direction, which is a more neutral interaction between dogs.



- Begin introductions by taking the dogs on a walk together, ideally with one person walking each dog. This is an excellent way for dogs of any age to get used to each other slowly. Walk them as far apart as necessary to make the experience positive for both dogs.
- If you are walking the dogs by yourself, walk one on each side.
- The dogs can sniff each other periodically during the walk as long as both dogs looked relaxed. If either dog becomes tense, distract them away from each other with praise, treats, or even a squeaky toy. Give them more space from each other before moving them closer together again.
- Separate the dogs when you return home.

Prepare the Room:

- Keep the puppy separate from the adult dog in the house by putting the puppy in a crate or in a separate room with a baby gate. Make sure the baby gate is secure enough that neither dog can knock it over.
- To help reduce the chance for problems between the dogs, remove anything your adult dog might become possessive about, which can include toys, treats, food bowls and water bowls.



Introductions:

Only move on to the actual introduction in the house if both dogs are relaxed. If the adult dog shows any frustration or aggression towards the puppy, give him more time to get used to the puppy being in the house before letting them meet.

- Allow the dogs to sniff each other through the baby gate, or put both dogs on a leash and have one person hold the leash of each dog.
- Work on a sit and focus with both dogs on leash and separate from each other, at a distance where each dog will sit, look at you and take treats. Consistently practicing this teaches both dogs that you are more exciting than the other dog, and will ultimately give you more control over your dogs in general.



Behaviors to Watch for:

- Your puppy may want to jump up towards the older dog's face and lick his muzzle. This is very normal, submissive puppy behavior but can be uncomfortable to an adult dog.
- Your adult dog may snap or growl at the puppy. This can be an appropriate correction as long as it only causes the puppy to calm or stop his interactions with the adult dog. It should not cause the puppy to scream or to run and hide.
- If your dog does snap at your puppy, make sure he didn't make contact with the puppy and cause injury.
- Sometimes an adult dog is too submissive with a rambunctious puppy and will not properly correct the pup. This can sometimes cause the puppy to become even more bold and obnoxious. In this case, keep a leash on your puppy and frequently lead him away from your adult dog when your pup becomes overwhelming to him. Work on a sit and focus with your puppy during these breaks.



Management:

- Always remember to separate the dogs when you are not there to supervise. It can be helpful to keep the puppy in a crate and let the older dog have the run of the house. This prevents issues between the dogs and also keeps the puppy from getting into trouble.
- When you are home, and after the initial introduction, have your puppy drag a lightweight leash around the house. This gives you an easy way to control your puppy if he becomes too much for your other dog. Use the leash to lead him away from your adult dog and work on a sit and focus.
- Remember to praise both dogs for any calm and/or appropriate interactions.

Note: Puppies have to earn the right to be loose in the house, especially with another dog. It is okay to allow your adult dog to have full freedom while keeping the puppy in a crate or small room. You can continue to give your puppy more freedom as he shows that he can handle it without making a mistake.