

INTRODUCING YOUR NEW PUPPY TO YOUR OTHER DOGS

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Dogs are social animals. This means they normally live together in groups that are highly structured. A dominance hierarchy or "pecking order" is established among dogs living in the same household. This order is determined by the outcomes of interactions between the dogs. Owners cannot choose which dog they want to be dominant. When a new dog is brought into the family, the hierarchy is upset and becomes unstable as the newcomer finds her own place in the social order.

Puppies and the Dominance Hierarchy

Puppies almost without exception will be the most subordinate members of the hierarchy. Within the litter, puppies will establish some degree of a dominance hierarchy among themselves but all will be submissive to adults. When you bring a new puppy into the house, expect the resident adult dog to establish herself as the dominant animal. Dominant dogs expect to receive certain benefits due to their social position. These can include being fed first, passing through doors first, being able to push other dogs out of the way in order to be petted, and controlling toys and preferred sleeping areas. These behaviors relate to social dominance, not to "jealousy" between the dogs which is an anthropomorphic interpretation. Owners need to support the resident dog's position by allowing her to be first, and not favoring the puppy. A dominant adult dog should also be allowed to set limits with the puppy by growling or snarling. Well socialized adult dogs with good temperaments will use these threatening behaviors to set limits with the puppy without harming her. These *ritualized* behaviors are the means dogs use to establish and maintain the social structure without injury to themselves or other members of the group. Preventing the adult dog from demonstrating her position using just threats can push her to show her dominance with more aggressive behaviors such as biting.

Keep the Routine

Keep the resident dog's routine the same as possible by not changing her feeding, exercise, play, and sleeping times and locations. You can also give both the adult and the puppy some time alone with you. It's not uncommon for a puppy to have a difficult time playing with toys because the adult dog takes his toys away. Either different family members can play with the animals in separate rooms at times, or the adult can be confined with a special chewie while the puppy has some playtime. Be careful not to isolate the adult in such a way that she perceives the puppy is receiving special attention and she is not. This could undermine the dominance hierarchy and contribute to a problem. Be sure to give an adult dog some quiet time away from the pestering play of a young puppy.

Initial Introductions

If you have chosen a puppy several days before he will actually come home, you can introduce your resident dog to the puppy's scent. Bring the puppy's sleeping blankets home from the breeder, or even just wipe a towel over the puppy you have chosen from the animal shelter. Put the towel under your dog's food bowl, in her bed, or in your lap when you hold her. In this way, the puppy's scent becomes associated with "good things" for the adult.

This idea - the adult should expect "good things" to happen whenever the puppy is around should be carried over to the rest of the introduction process. Let the resident dog sniff the puppy, which is normal canine greeting behavior. As she does so, talk to her in a happy,

friendly tone of voice "Look at your new friend!! What a good dog you are!" Don't use a threatening tone of voice "FIDOOOO---BE GOOD". If you see the puppy becoming frightened or the adult getting too threatening, interrupt the interaction by getting the adult interested in doing something else. Call her over to you for a tidbit or toss her favorite ball. After both animals have calmed down, try the introduction again with more distance between the two dogs.

You may need to feed the dogs separately at first so the adult doesn't steal the puppy's food. The adult dog can also be encouraged to leave the puppy's food alone by giving her something else to do while the puppy is eating.

Introducing The Puppy to Several Resident Dogs

A group of dogs may have a tendency to "gang up" on a newcomer. In addition, *redirected* aggression can occur. If one of the adults is provoked by a more dominant one, he can attack a third, more subordinate animal which may be the puppy. A puppy is a likely candidate for both kinds of attack. To be safe, if there is more than one resident dog, it's probably a good idea to introduce them to the puppy one at a time.

As The Puppy Matures

Aggressive fighting problems are unlikely to occur when a young puppy is first introduced because puppies are generally subordinate and not viewed by adults as threats. However, as the puppy matures and grows, she may attempt to challenge one or more of the adult dogs for a higher position in the social hierarchy. These "canine rivalry" problems need to be dealt with using appropriate behavioral techniques. Punishing either dog is likely to make the problem worse. If the introduction of your puppy does not go well or if conflicts between the dogs arise later on, consult your veterinarian for more information or for a referral to a behavior professional. The certified applied animal behaviorists at Animal Behavior Associates Inc., will be happy to consult with you and help you work with your dogs.