



## Guide to Dog Introductions

Adopting a new dog is an exciting experience for you, your family, and your other dogs! It is essential to start the relationship between your dogs on a good note. **It is not recommended to bring your resident dog to the shelter to meet a new dog.** Many dogs are incredibly stressed by the shelter environment and may be aggressive toward other dogs due to the stress. Even more often, dogs do well together outside of the home, but in the home they may be more possessive of their space and become aggressive. Instead, introduce the dogs slowly and systematically. Just like any relationship, the dogs will need time for friendship to form and strengthen.

*Follow these steps to set yourself, and your dogs, up for success.*

1. Do not take your new dog home in the same car as your resident dog. Leave your resident dog at home for the adoption and ride home.
2. Introduce your new dog to your resident dog in an open, neutral space such as a yard. Avoid letting the dogs meet indoors, especially in the beginning. The close quarters remove the dogs' ability to flee if they are feeling overwhelmed.
  - a. Clip a leash to the dogs' collars. Use a flat buckle collar. Avoid using harnesses, slip leads, choke chains, gentle leaders, or anything else that will restrict the dogs' movement.
  - b. Keep the leashes loose and allow the dogs to meet each other on their own terms. Only put tension on the leashes if you need to separate the dogs.
  - c. If one dog avoids the other, allow that dog to move away. Do not force the dogs on each other. If one or both dogs show aggression, separate them and try again later.
  - d. Watch body language closely as the dogs investigate each other.
    - i. Watch for loose, wiggly body posture. This is a great sign that they are comfortable. Tails wags can be deceiving, just because the tail is wagging, does NOT mean the dogs are comfortable.
    - ii. End the meeting if you see the dogs' become fixated on each other or if their body posture becomes stiff. Also end the meeting if the dogs' tails go straight up and twitch back and forth.
3. Only allow the dogs to interact with each other when you are there to supervise them for the first couple of weeks. For at least the first week, allow the dogs to play outside, but keep them separated indoors.
4. Always feed the dogs separately. Do not leave high value items lying around (i.e. rawhides, bones, treats).

If you have tried what is provided here and still have questions, contact [larimerbehaviorhelp@nocohumane.org](mailto:larimerbehaviorhelp@nocohumane.org) or call 970-226-3647 ext. 5130