

Ideal Protocol to Introducing a New Dog to Your Resident Dog

By Kathrine Breeden

The following protocol can be used for introducing a dog that is merely going to be visiting for a few days/weeks, a foster dog or a newly adopted dog.

The whole point is to give the dogs the chance to get acclimated to the smell of the other dog without the stress of having to deal with the other dog face to face, in their space, around their toys, beds, resources, food, people etc.

In other words, both dogs can learn that even though the other dog is in the house, they are not being adversely affected by the other dog.

There are several stages to go through.

PREPARATION: If possible, it's ideal to introduce the scent of each dog to the other dog before they're even in the same house. For example, if a family member will be visiting, they can prepare some scent samples (details at the end of this article) and send them in advance.

Those scent samples can then be tied to the resident dog's collar/harness, placed in his kennel/crate etc and rubbed on him. The same can be done for the visiting dog.

STAGE ONE:

When the new dog arrives at the home it is crucial that the dogs do not make visual contact (**no eye contact whatsoever**) until the final stage. We cannot let them see one another, but we *will* let them experience the smell of each other.

Both dogs need a secure area – this can be a kennel/crate/cage/small room with baby gate or door closed.

Old t-shirts, cut up towels, blankets, dog beds and toys can be used as scent articles.

Place scented articles from each dog in the other dog's safe area.

The *switching* of these scent articles alone will allow a deeper relationship between the dogs. We are communicating to the dogs by the way they understand... through their nose!

The STAGE TWO will be to let the new dog roam around the house. He will be getting accustomed to his new home and his new owners. You might notice him occasionally rubbing himself against a wall or piece of furniture – or in some way putting his scent, however subtly, around the inside of the house.

With a new dog you won't want to let him have too much time to wander around because he might also do some urine marking! Let him outside as quickly as possible. He can put his scent all over the outside area.

Your resident dog should be confined and out of sight when the new dog is out of his cage.

Once the new dog has checked out his new environment and had the opportunity to leave his own scent about the house, place the new dog in his safe area of confinement and take the scent articles from there to place in the resident dog's safe area.

Now you're ready for STAGE THREE: let the resident dog out to roam around the house and yard.

Take the scent articles from the resident dog's safe area and place them with the new dog.

The first time the resident dog goes exploring he will vigorously explore the scent left around the home by the new dog until he is satisfied the intruder has "escaped".

Your resident dog might be overwhelmed and confused and now needs your comfort. Allowing him to sit on your lap or by your side, or a game of fetch, can serve as the quality time he needs during this scent discovery period.

You will repeat Stages Two and Three many times daily, you should be watching both dogs' body language to enable you to calculate when they are ready to actually meet face to face. Remember to swap the scent articles each time.

What are you looking for? In both dogs, you are looking for excessive interest in the other dog's presence. If either dog is racing around looking for the other dog, dashing from place to place as if they're trying to find the other dog and is generally over-aroused then this is not a good omen of how things will go when they meet!

We want to reach the stage where neither dog is taking any notice of the presence of the other dog. The resident dog should be behaving just how he did before the other dog arrived in the house.

Until the resident dog is behaving in that way there is a good chance that if you introduce them while he's showing excessive interest in the other dog, there will be trouble between them.

For the resident dog to understand the new smell, he should be let out of the cage as many times a day as possible. The resident dog should only be let out after the new dog has played, and has been put away.

With these short routines, both dogs are familiarizing each other at a faster rate. Actually, the concept is quite simple. The more times you let your new then resident dog out, the quicker they will be acquainted.

Your resident dog will display his permission as to when the two should meet. When he comes out of the cage and does not follow the scent of the new dog, your resident dog has given his permission. **NOW THE NEW DOGS CAN MEET FACE TO FACE**, since they are familiar and comfortable with one another's scent. This process takes varying lengths of time depending on the dogs' like or dislike of other dogs. It can take minutes, hours or weeks depending on the individual dogs. When both dogs are showing **NO** interest in the scent of the other dog this is the best time to introduce them face to face.

The FOURTH STEP is to introduce the dogs face to face. If at all possible, for territorial reasons, when introducing the dogs it should not be on your property.

A neighbors fenced in yard, a fenced in ball field (when no other dogs or people might interfere), or any other fenced in area will be an appropriate meeting ground. Leashes may not take the place of a fenced in area; holding the leashes may potentially bring out aggression.

If possible, let the resident dog run around the field, while the new dog is out of sight. The resident dog is laying the now familiar scent.

Now it is time for the new dog to play in the field. The resident dog is out of sight and the new dog also smells the familiar resident dog's scent. They will both detect the familiar scent just like in the home.

Since the dogs have already been formally introduced via each other's scent, they are ready to meet face to face. The area is safe because they are confined and can not run away. The dogs usually run over to greet each other, smell, posture... and have no inclination to fight.

If there is no safe area to introduce the dogs then taking them for a walk on leash can substitute. Walk parallel to one another, if necessary on opposite sides of the street and get gradually closer. If either dog is showing excessive interest in the other dog then don't bring them any closer – it will probably be a bad greeting!

If one dog is more calm and stable than the other you can walk that dog in front and gradually let the other dog get close enough to do a quick butt sniff and go away. Keep practicing until the whole process is very calm then reverse roles.

If you are forced to introduce the dogs in a fenced back yard, probably a fairly small area, let the resident dog out first. Both dogs should have leashes attached but not held, (unless there are lots of trees & bushes they could get caught on and in that case use a very short, maybe 18" leash so at least you've got something you could get hold of in an emergency other than the collar/harness) and you should have a garden hose pipe with a "gun" attachment set on "jet" turned on at the ready.

Don't hang around near the door area. Let the new dog out. Ideally you would have several people present and all keep chatting in a relaxed manner and walking around.

Don't stand still, staring at the dogs to see what happens. Keep it upbeat, but not crazy excited, and relaxed. Walking around, distracting the dogs if you see tension, will help to keep the meeting relaxed and successful.

This outlined routine has demonstrated a stress free and safe way to introduce new dogs. A dog's sense of smell is considered by many as its primary sense. Therefore, this training is based entirely upon the scent.

This method will easily work with trained or misbehaved dogs. We are working hand in hand with the dog's natural instincts. Allowing the dog's instincts to teach the lesson will make learning simple yet efficient.

If either dog has a history of aggression towards other dogs this does not necessarily mean they cannot co-exist with another dog – it does mean that they probably need a long slow period of

acclimatization to the new dog being on their property and then very careful management once they have met to ensure that they continue to get along. It is best to consult a professional for help with those types of dogs!

PREPARATION OF SCENT ARTICLES

If you have the luxury of preparing scent articles and sending them ahead here is the procedure:

Take strips of t-shirts, sheets or towels and rub them all over the dog. Place them promptly into Ziplock bags and freeze them. This will protect the integrity of the scent.

If you are able to deliver frozen scent samples that's great!

Otherwise send them in the mail with ice packs if possible.

Refreeze upon arrival.