

Introducing A New Puppy to Your Family Dog, Cat, & Other Pets



Many families that already include a dog, cat, or other pet consider expanding to include a new puppy. Sometimes, the family feels that their young adult dog would have fun with a companion & they are ready for another addition to their lives. Some people are active in a dog sport or training, and seek a new partner for a particular activity. Other common reasons include a desire to bring in a puppy before an elderly dog passes. Some feel this will make it easier when they lose one. Others hope the older dog will help teach the puppy in the ways of the world. And, some folks just tell me they love the breed and they have room in their hearts and homes for one more!

Male or Female?

The most common question these families ask me is whether they should get a male or a female, based on which sex they have already.

Here is my general answer:

If you have a female, you should be able to bring in another female or a male. I assume your female is social and not overly dominant with other girls. In my experience, NONE of my 8 girls fight, and they all live together in the house.

If you have a male, you should most likely get a female. The exception; two male puppies who grow up together and both get neutered can get along. Or: An adult neutered male who is social and good with puppies/males can get along with a male puppy who gets neutered before he is an adult. My experience with males: Two adult intact males will get into squabbles. One intact and one neutered male will often get into squabbles. I have intact male littermates, raised together, the best of friends, who began to get into "arguments" when they reached about 8 months old. This is common.

Questions to Answer honestly before Choosing to bring a New Puppy into Your Family

Does your adult dog or older puppy like puppies?



Many dogs dislike puppies. This may be due to puppies' bounciness and lack of manners, this could be because the older dog feels pain when puppies pounce, or it could just be personal preference! If your dog dislikes puppies & has shown aggression towards puppies in the past, you should not introduce a puppy into your family. It may be disappointing, but, if your existing dog is not a good candidate for a puppy, you must come to terms with this reality. It may be that you could consider adopting an older dog. Many dogs who dislike pups are happy to play with adults. There are breeders who retire breeding dogs and re home them. This could be a way for you to add on to your family without the puppy problem! (We do not re-home our adults. Ours live here for their lifetime. But, many breeders do offer this and I can provide you a list of a few.)

Is your existing dog socialized & playful?

Does he have sore hips?

Is he possessive or aggressive over toys or food?

If your dog is social, playful, and seems to enjoy when his friends come over to play, he is a good candidate to get on well with a puppy.

If your adult dog is elderly, does he have sore hips or arthritis or any medical condition that might prevent him from enjoying rough play with a boisterous puppy?

If your dog has shown any aggression over food and toys, you must think very carefully about how you will separate a puppy at meal times and how you will be sure there are no toys or chewies to fight over. (Perhaps the dogs can only have something to chew when in their crates or separated.)

Do you have a way to keep Puppy safely separated from your adult/older puppy?

You should separate your adult and puppy when they eat. You should not leave them alone, loose together until puppy is perhaps 4-6 months old and can hold his own. Never leave an 8 -12 week old puppy loose with an adult when you are not there.

Do you have time to train and exercise your puppy separately from your other dog?

You will need to create time to work with puppy for 15 minutes or so a day, alone, in order to establish a good training foundation. Later, when puppy knows his commands, you can work with both dogs as a way of "proofing" behavior with distraction. You may also need to take puppy for play time and exercise separately from your adult, at least at first. Puppy K class is a great way to be sure your puppy gets playtime with others his own age.

CATS:



Have your cats been raised with a dog - from when he was a PUPPY?

Do your cats have safe escape routes from a curious puppy?

Are your cats outdoor cats? If so, are they protected for fleas/ticks?
Outdoor cats are notorious for carrying fleas and donating them to your puppy!

You should be sure that the cats do not get cornered by the curious puppy, especially if the cat is accustomed to your past or older dog, who knows how to behave. A puppy might be tempted to chase and pounce a cat, who is not expecting this & is not amused!

You should keep your litter box and cat food where puppy can not get into it. You should supervise all interaction until everyone is comfortable with each other.

If you have a **small pet - such as a rabbit or reptile**, you will need to be sure the puppy can not get access to the pet. Most German Shepherd Dogs can be trained not to kill livestock and small animals. However, many GSDs do have a high prey instinct/prey drive and they will act on it! A puppy should not be playing with your house rabbit.

Introductions



Once a family decides to add a puppy to their home, the next question is usually how best to introduce the puppy to the other dog. I have heard some very odd methods!

One trainer told a family to put the puppy in a crate out in a field. Then, walk with their dog up to the crate as if they "found" an abandoned puppy, and take it with them. In my opinion, this is crazy, not to mention stressful for puppy!

My tips: If you can introduce them on neutral ground, great.

*If you must bring your dog with you when you pick up puppy, do not allow the adult to bark at the puppy's crate in your vehicle. Have a way to restrain him - crate him - if necessary. **Puppy should always be transported from breeder to home in a crate.****

If you plan to introduce them at home, a good idea is to baby gate off an area for puppy. Allow your other dog to see/watch/sniff, but not come into the space at first. You need to SUPERVISE in case of enthusiastic gate crashing!

Meeting outside can be less threatening for canine introductions, especially with a territorial older dog. If you have more than one dog, introduce them to the puppy one at a time. Make sure all dogs are leashed and there is an adult holding each leash. (ADULT = Not a child)

Let them sniff each other, which is normal canine greeting behavior, and talk to them in a happy, friendly voice. Walk the dogs around and let them sniff and investigate each other at intervals.

Watch carefully for body language that indicate an aggressive response, including hackles standing up on the other dog's back, lip curling, teeth-baring, deep growls, a stiff legged gait, tail held high and stiffly, or a prolonged stare. If you see such postures, interrupt the interaction immediately by calmly and positively getting each dog interested in something else. (The adult with the older dog can call him over or take in his leash, ask for a sit, give a food reward, or play with a toy. Do not do this if the dog tends to be aggressive about food/toys.) Try letting the dogs interact again, but this time for a shorter time period and/or at a greater

distance from each other.

When the dogs seem to be tolerating each other's presence without fearful or aggressive responses, and the investigative greeting behaviors have tapered off, you can drop the leash on puppy (if you're in a fenced yard) and let the dogs explore the yard together, while you follow closely, with older dog on leash. Remember, the puppy is too small to be "trucked" over by your older dog. Puppy may be intimidated or overwhelmed, so go slow. You may even leave this exploring part for a few days down the road! When the dogs come inside, you may still want to leave the leash on your adult dog when the two are in the same space. You also want to put all toys (and especially all treats, like rawhide, etc.) away until everyone is comfortable. You should place puppy in his gated area, away from your other dog, so puppy can get adjusted to this new space. If you have a crate set up within the area, puppy might even decide to retreat to nap.

Always supervise play. Even a very social friendly adult or older puppy can frighten an 8 week old pup who has no reference for what to do with a giant playmate. Your puppy will likely need to be about 14 weeks before he is comfortable with your older/heavier/larger dog. Remember, even if your other dog is a Llasa Apso, an adult is more coordinated and heavier than a small puppy & a puppy is not able to defend himself well from an attack or rough play.

Helpful Reading: Our articles on Children & Puppies, Puppy Proofing your Home, & How to Make your Puppy at Home.

We provide our puppy clients with our "Puppy Manual", containing all of our articles. Only a few of these are on our website.

