



Dog-to-Dog Introductions

Be Calm

When **introducing** two dogs to each other it is very important to be as calm as possible. Any **anxiety** or **apprehension** we have at the time will travel **right down** the leash to the dog. Dogs are **experts** at reading our body language.

- Pay **attention** to your **breathing**. A dog will notice if you start **breathing** faster and they will **become** more anxious themselves.
- Don't talk excessively to the dog. Sometimes when we become **anxious** about a dog **approaching** we will **start talking** to our dog, "good boy, that's okay, you're alright, what a good puppy!"
- Watch the **tension** on the **leash**. **Often** we will wrap the leash **tighter and tighter** reeling our dog closer and closer to us. We want to have the **leash** as **slack** as possible when **meeting** another dog while still **maintaining** control over our dog.

Be Confident

Most dogs look to us to **give them cues** about how to behave/react. If we walk casually up to an **approaching** dog rather than **pausing** and **tensing up** our dog is more **likely** to be casual about the **meeting** too

Watch the Body Language

Careful observation of the dogs' body language during the **first few seconds** of an introduction can tell us a lot. Here are some signs dogs give to each other:

"I like you. Let's be friends."

- Loose/wiggly body
- Ears **back** or relaxed
- Panting/smiling
- Tail loose/**held down** or level
- Wiggly/**bouncing/bowing** lip licking

"Leave me alone. I don't want to play."

- Stiff/**tense** body
- Ears very far forward
- **Closed/tight** mouth
- Tail **arched** up over back
- Frozen/**standing up on** tip toes
- Lip curling hard, **direct** staring

Mixed Signals

Some dog body language is difficult to read and some signals may mean one thing to one dog and something entirely different to another. Here are some examples:

Hackles: the **hackles** or hair along the dog's spine may stand up for a variety of reasons. For some dogs it can be fear or anxiety while for **other** dogs it can be excitement or arousal.

Tail wagging: do not pay attention to tail wagging. A wagging tail does not always mean a dog is happy. It can also signal excitement or arousal. Dogs chasing prey often **wag** their tail excitedly during the chase and capture as do some dogs while **fighting** with other dogs.



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Vocalizations: barking or whining when approaching another dog is not always a signal that the dog will behave aggressively when it meets the other dog. Many dogs who come on too strong and lack manners will bark incessantly at an approaching dog but become friends very quickly once they meet.

Other Tips

- Often we can ease the introduction by having the two dogs go for a walk around the courtyard or training field together prior to meeting. They can be close but not close enough to meet yet. This often helps with overly aroused/excited and barky dogs.
- Flexi-leads are your enemy. Always carry two leashes when doing meet and greets. No one can have very good control over their dog on a flexi-lead.
- Use caution so as to not tangle the leashes. This means doing “the circle dance” around the dogs as they walk in circles sniffing each other.
- If the initial greeting goes well and you want to let the dogs loose to play, keep the leashes attached and dragging just in case. Something may start a squabble later and you may need to pull the dogs apart. Grab the leash and not the dog to keep yourself safe.
- If you don't feel comfortable doing an introduction or see something during an introduction that worries you don't hesitate to call a senior counselor or behavior staff for consult.