

## **INTRODUCTIONS**

### **PUPPIES**

It is easier to introduce a puppy or younger dog into a household with adult dogs than to introduce an adult dog. The most important thing to remember with puppies under 6 months is that when they are with the adult dog, they must be observed at all times. Adults playing with puppies can sometimes inadvertently injure them, or puppies can injure themselves with too much running and jumping. Puppies also do things that annoy adults and the adult will snap to teach the puppy a lesson and remind it of its place in the pack order. This teaches the puppy “doggy manners” and a self-confident puppy will come back for me. But a sensitive puppy can be made fearful of the adult and this can cause a set back in their relationship.

It is better initially to keep the puppy separate from the adult. You can hold the puppy so the adult can sniff and meet, but watch the carefully in case he decides to nip at the puppy. The puppy can be kept in a crate and the adult dog allowed to sniff at and communicate with the crated puppy. Or the puppy can be kept in a separate area, blocked off by a baby gate (if it will keep the adult out) or some other type of secure barrier and they can communicate through the barrier. Anytime you leave the room, take the adult with you to ensure the puppy’s safety. When you go outside or leave the house, make sure the puppy is safely crated. Give this a few weeks and then with the adult on lead, let him and the puppy interact on a regular basis indoors. Always be ready to intervene if their interactions get too rough.

You can take both outside while they are leashed. One person should have the adult, the other the puppy and both people should watch carefully. They can sniff and interact, and when the older dog becomes playful, make sure the puppy does not get injured by accident. If all goes well, the puppy’s leash can be dropped but be ready to quickly move in if necessary. This stage should last about 2-3 weeks. Then the puppy can be let off lead in the yard, with the adult still leashed. Once again, let them interact and be ready to separate them if things start getting out of control. This step should last for 10-14 days. If all is well in these sessions, let the adult off lead, still watching very carefully and staying close to them. If one or the other gets too rough or too wound up, leads are in order again. I am loathe to leave small puppies running with big dogs...only because they can be hurt by the big dog playing, or hurt themselves by pushing too hard playing. **MAKE SURE THERE IS NOTHING TO ARGUE OVER ANYWHERE. THIS MEANS BONES, TOYS, FOOD, CHEWIES, FOOD BOWLS, AND BLANKETS.** Eventually they may be able to share some toys, but I prefer to leave those in crates or available only when they are separate. My own dogs don’t mind sharing Booda–bones, and kong toys, but nothing else.

### **ADULTS**

Introducing a new adult may or may not work. It helps if both adults had been socialized with dogs before, and if they are of opposite sex. Before bringing in the new dog make sure there is no antagonism between the two by introducing them and meeting several times before a final decision is made. Walk them in neutral territory, a person on each side of the street holding a dog. Keep walking like this until they ignore each other and move a little closer. Repeat the walking until they are ignoring each other again, and get a little closer. At no time are the dogs to meet or be within touching distance. Good signs are the dogs either ignoring each other or displaying play behavior. Bad signs are obvious aggression or any of these signals: hackling, growling, or lunging aggressively. If this happens then perhaps the addition of that dog to the family should be reconsidered.

So the first meeting went fairly well. They ignored each other. The new dog is brought into the house while the resident dog is outside. I put the new dog in a crate, which is placed in a high traffic area; a place where the family usually spends most of their time such as a kitchen or family room. In this manner, the new dog can accustom itself to the rhythms,

sounds and smells of the household. It is quite permissible for the resident dog to walk over and sniff at the newcomer's crate. However, at the first sign of aggression, i.e., hackling, growling, or posturing from either dog, they are corrected. The owner must be very vigilant and very consistent in stopping signs and sounds of aggression from either dog. One way to acclimate them is to use a "clicker" method of training, which is a very positive way of training. There are many good books and videos available on various websites or in the library on how to use this training method. Once you have introduced both dogs to this training, every time they sniff or interact in any way that is peaceful, "click" and treat them both. The dogs are kept separate other than sniffing or interacting peacefully through the crate. To do this, the resident is let outside, brought in and given personal time, then put in his crate or another room. Then the new dog is let outside to run around and do his business. He comes in, gets some time in the house, and is crated again. The resident comes out and gets some special attention. Everything is done in shifts in this "getting used to each other" period. It is time consuming and can be difficult, but worth it in the long run. A little side note: feed the new dog in the crate and remove the bowl once he is finished or at the end of a prescribed time period (15-20 minutes). Make sure every time he goes in the crate, even if he has to be shoved in, to give him treat. This may help him become accustomed to being crated more quickly.

I leave the crate situation going for at least 4 weeks. This gives the new dog time to acclimate to the household and learn to trust his new owners. Putting the new dog in an outdoor run with the resident dog loose in the yard, in my experience, usually just creates more antagonism. This can work if you are willing to stand outside the entire time they are out, and use the clicker training to encourage positive actions and to otherwise correct any signs of aggression on either dog's part. It is better to walk the dogs as long as no contact is allowed. The person with the resident dog goes out first, taking the dog out to the street or sidewalk. The other person follows with the new dog. The two dogs are walked next to each other, but not close. There should be at least 6 feet between them when they are at the end of their leads. A 4 foot lead is preferable for this part of the introduction because there is more control when using a shorter lead. These walks can go on for several weeks, until the time when neither dog reacts at all to the other's presence. Once that happens you can let them move closer, always alert for the body language signaling any trouble. This process should also take several weeks until they can be walked close to each other with no signs of aggression. Exhibiting playful behavior is a good sign. The next step is to bring both dogs on the property at the end of the walk, resident dog first, and stay in the yard with them both on lead. After a few weeks, the calmest dog's lead can be dropped, still closely watching them both. Do this several times a week over a period of several weeks. Then switch about and drop the other dog's lead, staying vigilant to stop any trouble before it starts. After several weeks of alternating you can try them both with leads dropped, once you have cleared the area of anything that could possibly cause a fight...sticks, balls, plastic cartons, toys, whatever. Stay near, watching them very carefully and separate at even the slightest hint of a problem. If all goes well, after walking them (it burns off energy and calms them down) let them play in the fenced yard together. Never leave them unattended until you are VERY SURE that they are getting along well and the chance of a fight is as minimal as possible. (However sure of that you can be!) The dogs can be moved into the house together following the same methods: both on lead; one leash dropped; both leads dropped, all the while being closely observed and having someone ready to step in if necessary. Each phase should last several weeks. Having two Akitas of the same sex is very risky and not recommended. Even if they appear to be living in harmony, never leave them alone unattended in the house. With those of the opposite sex, wait for at least 6-12 month before leaving them unattended in the house. Initially your absences should be short, perhaps 5 minutes, and then gradually lengthen the time. The point of return is a dangerous moment. Both dogs are in a high emotional state at your return, and this could cause a fight, so be prepared.

## **FIGHTS**

There are some other factors that come into play which could cause fights when they are inside or out. Another dog passing in front of the property can cause displaced aggression in one of the dogs and it attacks its companion. (This is also known as “If you can’t bite the one you want, bite the one you’re with.”). Other fight instigators are: “running the fence” with a neighbor’s dog, a cat in front of the house or fence, or a wild animal such as a squirrel, bunny, possum, or wounded bird in the yard. So check the yard daily before letting the dogs out together. Never feed the dogs close together. Make sure they are in separate rooms or if one dog is crated while eating, the other should stay away until the crated dog is finished and his bowl removed. Don’t get lazy and let a moment’s carelessness ruin months of work. Remember they are affected by the weather also. In the summer they are hot and uncomfortable, and more likely to take offense than they would in the cooler weather. In the winter, when it is really cold, they feel very frisky and play can very quickly escalate into a fight. Constant monitoring is the price of having a multi-dog household.

Fights disrupt and set back their relationship. If there are injuries, do not initiate any contact between them until all the injuries are completely healed. If there are no injuries, give them a week or so to calm down before re-introducing them. Once again there should be no contact in this cooling off period. Start at the beginning, with one dog in a crate and one out, and walking on opposite sides of the street. Any signs of aggression should be disciplined. If they show signs of aggression, wait for another week. Once they appear to be comfortable in each other’s presence, you may begin the process all over again. Remember that one fight may make them enemies for life and you may never be able to have them interact again.

#### **CATS**

Introducing a dog to resident cats is a little different. Bring the dog in on leash and watch the cats’ reactions to the dog, and vice versa. If the cats don’t feel threatened or appear defensive, and the dog isn’t straining on the leash to get to the cats, it will probably work out. In my experience, puppies always chase cats. It is a puppy thing. Yes, they can be stopped and disciplined, but it usually takes a while for it to sink in. If they catch the kitty, they usually don’t do damage unless the cats hurts them. Then all bets are off. Most dogs will be interested in the cats, but not go into the predatory mode...ears forward, tail curled up tight, head, shoulders, back in a straight line, stalking. If they show this type of behavior, it may not work, or the cats and dogs will have to be kept separate. If it has been established that the dog is not predatory, and the cats feel okay around him, introductions begin. I crate the dog when I am not home, and when I am home, keep the dog on a leash that is attached to my waist. This allows some reaction time, and limits how far he can go if he decides to chase kitties. Another method is to put up a cheap wooden screen door in front of one room, leaving the regular door open. This arrangement allows the dog and cats to sniff and see each other, but with a safety barrier. Make sure the regular door is closed and keep them separate when unsupervised or if no one is home. Keep a very close watch on them until it is obvious they are comfortable together.

#### **KITTENS**

Introducing kittens requires a totally different technique. Kittens are very small and with their quick movements, VERY reminiscent of prey. They cannot climb, claw or escape from the dogs as quickly an adult cat can because they are young and not fully developed. When bringing in kitten, I put it in a separate room initially. Once it becomes acclimated to the environment and learns to trust me, I hold the kitten and let the dog sniff at it. If I have a very nice, calm dog whom I know likes cats, I will have him lay down, with the kitten loose, giving the kitten time to approach the dog at its own pace. When the kitten reaches four months, I will put it in a crate, with a litter box, food and some bedding. The crate is in a high traffic area, so the kitten can become accustomed to the sounds, smells and sights of the house. (I recommend a 700 Vari-kennel type plastic crate...kittens can slip through the wire ones.) It is better to do this, under supervision so

the dog(s) cannot terrorize the kitten by pawing at the crate and moving it around. If no one is home to monitor the animals, keep the kitten in a separate room. I do not feel comfortable letting the kitten run loose in the house until they are at least 8 months-1 year and able to escape or defend themselves if necessary.

#### **GENERAL**

Dynamics can change. A young dog may fit in well initially, but as he gets older may want to challenge the other dog for top position. If he continues fighting and challenging, they may have to be kept separate for life. You can have two dogs live together in harmony for years. They both have a bad day, and a fight ensues. If it is a bad one with serious injuries, or you have a dog that bears a grudge, they may never live in harmony again. An older dog can become blind, or have painful joint problems and no longer want to rough house. They may react accordingly when a young dog does not take the hint and leave them alone, starting a fight that the older dog is likely to lose. The best tools for success are being able to read your dog's body language and your knowledge of your dog's personality. Dogs, like people, have their individual quirks. Sometimes two dogs will just have a personality conflict and will not be able to get along. In this case, keep them separate forever, or re-home one dog.

The steps I have outlined are time consuming and quite often troublesome. But a good introduction sets the stage for the future relationship. Bad beginnings can make enemies for life. The time and effort to start things off right are well rewarded when you have two dogs, or a dog and a cat, living together happily and peacefully.

**A FINAL NOTE OF CAUTION:** If you leave dogs, or dogs and cats, home alone together there is a very real possibility that you may come home to serious injuries, or the death of one of the animals.

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