



ARLGP FOSTER PROGRAM RESOURCES: Introducing a Resident Dog to a Shelter Dog

When introducing two dogs to each other, first impressions matter. How the dogs interact in their first few encounters can set the tone for how their relationship develops. Use this guide on introducing dogs to help get your dogs relationship off on the right foot.

If you have multiple dogs in your household these steps should be repeated for each dog individually before introducing the group. If you have several dogs this may need to happen over several hours or even several days in order manage stress. Make sure to have your home setup to allow slow introductions over several days prior to picking up your foster dog. (Please see our handout on Integrating a Shelter Animal into a Home with Other Pets.)

Equipment

Make sure both dogs are on a **securely fitting collar**. All animals coming from the ARLGP will be wearing a Martingale collar and should continue wearing this style of collar. A martingale collar is designed to be tightened slightly when pressure is applied in order to prevent the collar from slipping off. A well fitted martingale collar tightens until it fits snugly, but not beyond, so there is no chance of choking the dog as there would be with a choke chain or pinch collar.



Do not introduce dogs while wearing choke, pinch, prong or shock collars. These devices can negatively impact dog-to-dog introductions.

Dogs should be on a **standard 6 foot leashes** with loop handles for all introductions. Avoid retractable, bungee, and chain leashes or excessively long leashes or ropes.

Environment

Whenever possible have dogs meet outside. If this can be done inside a securely fenced area, that’s even better. Areas with grass and other places to sniff are great for providing natural distractions during the introduction.

Remove toys and treats from the introduction area: Regardless of their upbringing, personality or previous behavior, all dogs have the potential to guard resources. Resource guarding is a natural animal behavior (humans included) since access to resources like food, water, and a safe space is essential to survival. Even if neither dog involved in the introduction has ever shown tendencies toward guarding resources, it is safest to remove all toys and treats from the introduction area.

Determining How to Meet

If both dogs are exhibiting **relaxed/social behavior**, and/or sending **calming signals**, allow them to meet nose-to-nose.

If either dog is exhibiting any **signs of stress** it may be best to try tandem walking.

If either dog is exhibiting any **reactivity or other anti-social behavior** it is best to request a staff run introduction on campus. If this is the case please contact the ARLGP for further instructions.

CANINE BODY LANGUAGE			
Relaxed/Social Behavior	Calming Signals	Stress Behavior	Reactive and Anti-social Behavior
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Loose body · Soft eyes · Open mouth · Tongue lolling · Midline Tail Position · Wide, sweeping tail wags · Pawing the ground · Play bows · Laying down with relaxed, loose body and soft face · Giving kisses · Body wiggles/c-curve body 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Paw lift · Lip lick · Sniffing the ground · Crawling on ground · Rolling on back · Yawning · Scratching · Shaking off · Turning head or eyes away 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Stiff body · Closed Mouth · Lip Curl · Tail tucked · End of tail wagging rapidly · Tail held high · Hiding behind handler · Giving Corrections (lip curl, snap, head whip, growl, etc.) in response to interaction · Head wiping · Raised Hackles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Rigid, frozen body · Stalking and/or lunging · Growling, snapping, bared teeth from a distance or without provocation · Excessive vocalization · Inability to break focus · Repeatedly chasing, mounting, rolling over, standing over, holding down despite avoidance by or corrections from other dog or interruptions from handler

Nose to Nose Greeting

When doing nose to nose greetings **leashes should remain loose**. As easy as this sounds, it can be one of the most difficult tasks to accomplish. You will have a tendency to pull up at the last minute as the dogs rush to meet each other. Instead of pulling up, try to extend your arm at the last minute in order to give slack as the dogs meet. This will allow the dogs to meet with natural, upright postures, rather than leaning in, which can send false and misleading signals.



How many examples of canine body language can you identify in this image?

Tandem Walking

If either dog is exhibiting stress behaviors try taking both dogs for a walk together. At first you may need to walk with some distance between the dogs. Select the minimum distance in which neither dog is reacting to the presence of the other. Walk for at least 20-30 minutes. Allow the dogs to walk at their own pace and sniff their environment as they wish (do not pull them along in order to reach a certain destination). During that time slowly decrease the distance between the dogs as their responses allow. If you begin to see signs of stress or reactivity, separate to the least distance needed for the behavior to subside. If all goes well both dogs should be comfortable walking within a few feet of each other by the end of the walk.

Once you have had a successful introduction and possibly some additional opportunity to release some energy, bring the dogs inside. As with the outdoor space, make sure any items, such as toys, food

bowls, even beds, are put away to avoid conflict. Bring the dogs into the most open space in your home, so they have plenty of room to move around and get comfortable. Continue monitoring the dogs' interactions, **giving the shelter dog and resident dog plenty of breaks from one another**, even if they're really enjoying each other's company. Remember, they'll happily come back together if they're liking each other's company! Interaction breaks are as simple as putting the dogs in separate rooms, using a baby gate, or crate if the dogs are okay with confinement.

For more information, please refer to our handout: Integrating a Shelter Animal into a Home with Other Pets. You'll begin with Phase Two.