



Continued Exposure

Introducing a new dog to a family that already includes at least one dog can sometimes be a tenuous and possibly dangerous situation. Using our continued exposure process while introducing your new dog to the family is the safest way to ensure a successful and stress-free start to their new life.

Just like getting a new roommate in a college dorm, you don't always get to choose who you live with and sometimes you don't always get along right away. Dogs can have similar experiences, but they can always learn to coexist.

The key components necessary for ensuring that all dogs understand their role in the family are basic obedience training, and structured discipline in the home. Clearly defined rules can help all dogs understand their roles and expectations, and help reduce confusion and stress, especially when introducing a new dog into the home.

What is “Continued Exposure?”

Continued Exposure is the process by which we allow dogs to observe, see, smell, and hear a new dog for an extended period of time without having the actual opportunity to physically meet or interact with the other dog.

How does Continued Exposure help with introducing a new dog?

By allowing multiple dogs to observe each other without the fear of a possible negative interaction or dog fight situation allows them to understand that the other dog is not a threat. Also, by allowing each dog to see the family members interact with the other dog(s) also teaches the dog that the other dog is already accepted by the family.

Continued Exposure Step-by-Step

Stage 1 (3-5 Days):

- a. Dogs should initially be kept in separate kennels at least 6 feet apart. If the room allows for it, have the dogs be on opposite ends of the room.
- b. If the dogs become aggressive inside of their respective kennels, you should place their kennels where they cannot initially see each other, or place a divider preventing them from being able to see each other.
- c. When you take either dog out of their kennel, ensure to take them out ON LEASH to ensure they cannot approach the other dog's kennel. Move quickly and deliberately from the kennel out of the room where the other dog is kept and remain calm and neutral.
- d. Both dogs should be fed at the same time in their respective kennels. It is good practice to randomly change the order in which they are fed rather than continually feeding the same dog first and the other after.

Stage 2 (3-5 Days):

- a. Stage 2 begins with allowing dogs to be in their kennels and where they can see each other if their view of each other was blocked during stage 1.
- b. Also, now the dogs should be placed approximately 2-3 feet away from each other.
 - a. If they are in wire crates they may be side by side, and if they are in plastic travel crates, they should be placed with the wire doors facing each other.
- c. Continue to take each dog out of their crate separately and do not allow them to approach each others' kennels when they are released from their own kennel. Continue to feed them in their kennels at the same time varying which one gets their food first.

Stage 3 (1-2 Weeks):

- a. The dogs' kennels should be placed directly next to one another, with enough space between them that they cannot possibly bite or grab the other dog through the kennel walls. 2-3 inches of space between the kennels should be sufficient.
- b. Continue taking the dogs out separately and feeding them in their kennels. Take extra care to prevent the dog's from approaching the other's kennel when exiting.
- c. Begin Obedience training
 - a. Ideally, each of the dogs should already know basic commands such as "Heel," "Sit," and primarily "Place" by the time you reach stage three. If both dogs are not proficient with these commands by the stage, do not begin the obedience portion of this program until each are very proficient.
 - b. This part of the program should be done with an additional handler to assist with the training, but a coordinated handler should be able to manage as long as the dogs are proficient at the commands individually.
 - c. Begin practicing basic obedience training with both dogs in the same training space. Begin with having both dogs hold a place-stay for several minutes. You can then alternate walking each off of the place bed with the "Heel" command and then back onto the place bed for a place-stay while you "Heel" the other dog off of the place bed.
 - a. Take care to pay attention to both dogs throughout this stage of the program.
 - d. Training sessions should be short, about 10-15 minutes each. During each training session, gradually move the place beds closer until the beds are approximately 12-18 inches apart.
- d. During this stage the dogs are still not allowed to interact with each other. They may sniff in the other dog's direction, but do not allow them to make physical contact.

If at this point, you have seen no concerning signs or aggression or fear from either dog you can then move onto the "Proper Dog Introduction" procedures.