



Dog to Dog Aggression in the Home

Any time you have multiple dogs in a home that are struggling with aggression issues amongst one another, it's really important that you manage them and their environment in such a way that they cannot rehearse that aggressive behavior over and over again, thus preventing any escalation or injuries. This will also ensure that neither dog will harm one another until you can figure out what is causing the aggression and get help from a professional trainer or behaviorist. Dogs can become aggressive with one another at any time, and it could be due to a variety of reasons.

Some of the more common reasons that dogs in the same household fight include:

- a new dog has been brought into the home, and the resident dog doesn't quite know or trust the new dog and becomes territorial
- one of your dogs could be too energetic and playful for an older dog
- one of your dogs could be resource-guarding food, water, toys, bones, a sleeping spot, or a person in your home from the other dogs in your home, especially if one of the dogs is new to the home
- one dog could become worked up when a stranger comes to the door or sees a dog off in the distance and redirects its aggression onto another dog standing nearby
- one of your dogs could be experiencing a medical problem causing him or her pain (such as arthritis) and may snap at any dog or person that tries to approach and touch him or her
- The list could go on and on...

Below are some management tips to help your dogs get along better with one another:

- For starters, separating the dogs with baby gates until they become better accustomed to one another, or keeping one crated at a time and rotating them in and out of the crate one at a time are two different ways to manage two animals that don't initially get along.
- Taking your dogs for a long group walk should help them bond and feel like one family unit while walking around neutral territory.
- Spend separate one-on-one time with your dogs to give them the love and attention they crave while also helping to decrease any chances of jealousy developing between dogs.
- If you are introducing a new dog into your home, feed your dogs in separate rooms or in separate crates for at least the first couple months while the dogs are getting to know one another. Then you can try feeding them in the same room while standing between them. Generally speaking, you should try to feed them about eight or more feet apart to prevent any fights over food. It's common for dogs to want to guard their food from other dogs that may try to steal it, so to make

life less stressful for all your dogs, feed them separately and always monitor them, especially if they eat at different speeds.

- If you have one dog that eats faster than the other dog and the fast dog goes and bothers your other dog, feed your slow eater in another room or keep your fast eater on a leash while he eats, and then keep him with you until the other one is done. Feeding dogs in their crate is another great option because it will help your dog form a positive association with the crate, and your dog will be able to eat in peace.
- Never leave toys out unless supervised until you know that they won't fight over toys. Also, for the first three months, keep higher-value chew items like rawhides, bones, and antlers picked up, and only give them to your dogs when they are physically separated from one another. Most fights happen over chews like these that take your dog a while to eat.
- If you have a dog that is guarding its toys, try to figure out if it is only one type of toy and eliminate it from your toy selection, or only let that dog play with that toy when its alone. You can also help prevent toy aggression from becoming an issue by only putting out multiples of the same toy and having three more than you have total number of dogs. For example, if you have two dogs and want to give them tennis balls, put out 5 of the exact same tennis ball for them to play with, or if you have four dogs and want to give them Frisbees, put out 7 of the exact same Frisbee for them to play with.
- Make a point to ensure that your dogs are having pleasurable experiences together. One way to do this is by doing a tandem training session. A tandem training session is when you ask your dogs to all obey one command (sit/down/come) at the same time, or all look up at you quietly at the same time, and then rewarding them all with a small treat. By teaching your dogs to focus on you instead of on one another, you'll teach them to look to you for direction instead of letting one of your other dogs try to control the other animals in the house. Your dogs will also form a positive association with each other because they will be receiving treats while in the presence of one another, but you should only give them treats when they are behaving appropriately around one another; you don't want to accidentally reinforce your more confident dog for displacing or acting aggressive toward your submissive dog. If you have a new dog that you're adding to your household, for safety reasons, it would be best if you had one adult per dog and kept the dogs on leash while training the dogs together just in case one decides to become aggressive or pushy. You may have to start with the dogs 10 feet apart while training them and then slowly decrease the distance between them over the course of a few days.
- Make a point to physically pet and praise your dogs equally. Just like tandem training, it's important that all your dogs get the same amount of attention both when they're together and when they're apart. Many families enjoy cuddle time on the couch, but when a new dog is added to the mix, it's not uncommon for the resident dog to try and guard the couch and the people sitting on it from the other dog. Start by petting your new dog on one side while kneeling on the floor or sitting on the couch; then call your resident dog over to your free side and pet both dogs at the same time while verbally praising them for sitting quietly by you. If one dog starts to growl at the other dog, stand up immediately and have them "sit" in front of you. If the distraction of standing up and redirecting their attention back to you by asking for a "sit" does not work, walk out of the room with the dog that was being growled at.
- What NOT to do: Do not punish a dog for being aggressive toward another dog in your home because your dog will just associate the punishment with the other dog in your home and with you,

which will further break down the relationships. Do not allow your dogs to just fight or believe that they'll work it out on their own. One of your dogs could seriously injure or kill one of the other animals in your home. When introducing a new dog to your resident dog(s), do not keep your new dog in a crate or on a leash and then allow your other dog to circle around the crate and smell your new dog. That's a very scary situation for any dog and makes them feel cornered and defensive. Always introduce new dogs for the first time on neutral ground and with both dogs on leashes with little to no tension on their necks.

If, after trying these suggestions, you are still experiencing undesirable behaviors in your dog, SUBMIT QUESTIONS by clicking the link under Ask A Trainer on the Behavior and Training page of the Wayside Waifs website: www.waysidewaifs.org.

Written by the Wayside Waifs Animal Behavior Team
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Additional links and information:

<http://www.aspca.org/pet-care/virtual-pet-behaviorist/dog-behavior/aggression-dogs>
<http://www.aspca.org/pet-care/virtual-pet-behaviorist/dog-behavior/breaking-dogfight>
<http://www.aspca.org/pet-care/virtual-pet-behaviorist/dog-behavior/introducing-your-dog-new-dog>
<http://www.aspca.org/pet-care/virtual-pet-behaviorist/dog-behavior/canine-body-language>
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