



PUPPIES DOWNUNDER

Guide for Families Introducing a new puppy to an existing dog.

Welcoming a new puppy into your home is an exciting milestone for your family — and for your current dog, it's a big adjustment too. This guide explains what behaviour is normal, what to expect, and how to help both dogs build a positive relationship.

UNDERSTANDING NORMAL BEHAVIOUR

When introducing a puppy to a resident dog, it's completely normal to see:

- Growling, barking, or snapping: This is your older dog setting boundaries and teaching the puppy manners.
- Rough play and chasing: Dogs communicate and establish hierarchy through play.
- Jealousy or possessiveness: Your existing dog may guard toys, food, or even you temporarily.
- Unbalanced energy: Puppies are playful and persistent — older dogs may become irritated or overwhelmed.

These reactions are part of the natural adjustment process. It doesn't mean your dogs are incompatible. Most households experience this early tension, and with time and guidance, the relationship settles beautifully.

WHY IT HAPPENS

Dogs are social animals with defined structures within their pack. When a new puppy arrives, your existing dog must re-establish their place and communicate limits. This process may involve vocalisation, posturing, or short scuffles — all of which are normal canine communication as long as no dog is injured. Over the next few weeks, they'll learn to understand each other's signals and form their own friendship and balance.

HOW TO MANAGE THE INTRODUCTION

1. Choose a neutral space: Introduce the dogs outdoors or in an open area like the backyard.
2. Keep the first meeting short and calm: Allow sniffing while on lead, reward calm behaviour.
3. Supervise closely: Never leave them unsupervised for the first few weeks.

4. Manage resources: Feed separately and remove high-value toys until settled.
5. Maintain structure: Keep the older dog's routine consistent to reduce jealousy.
6. Encourage calm energy: Reward calm, relaxed interactions.
7. Don't intervene too quickly: Low growls or brief scuffles are normal teaching moments.
8. Provide downtime: Allow quiet separation periods for rest.

WHEN THEY FIGHT

It's important to know that minor fighting or snapping is normal in the early days. It's part of dogs setting boundaries and learning what's acceptable.

Normal behaviour includes:

- Brief growls or snaps that end quickly.
- The older dog walking away after a warning.
- The puppy returning more politely next time.

Abnormal behaviour includes:

- Prolonged aggressive attacks or repeated fighting.
- Any injury or signs of fear (tail tucked, hiding, trembling).

If serious aggression occurs, separate them calmly and try again later when both are relaxed. Avoid yelling — it can heighten tension. With supervision, consistency, and patience, most dogs settle and form a strong bond within 2–4 weeks.

TIPS TO HELP THE TRANSITION

- Walk them together to build trust and shared experiences.
- Give each dog individual time to prevent jealousy.
- Use positive reinforcement and reward calm behaviour.
- Avoid punishment — calm leadership is most effective.
- Crate or gate the puppy when rest or separation is needed.
- Stay patient — adjustment takes time and consistency.

REASSURANCE

Temporary tension is part of introducing a new family member. Your puppy is learning social boundaries, and your older dog is teaching them the rules. With gentle supervision and consistency, most households reach a peaceful balance within a few weeks.

NEED SUPPORT?

For additional advice or personalised guidance, contact Puppies Downunder.

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