



Another Dog?

by Katy Guy

I get asked all the time how I cope with 5 dogs. I hear things like.. “I bet they’re a handful”, or “which one is the boss”?

I often get told that someone is considering buying or getting a second dog to keep their original dog company. I hear this, and I instantly feel nervous. My advice to anyone considering adding a dog to their family is always this. Only get another dog if YOU want another dog. Obviously we have to consider the original dog but we also have to make sure we are not applying human emotion onto them. “He gets lonely” .. “he gets on so well with dogs at the park” ... “ he misses his pals at daycare when he comes home”. I’ve heard them all. My advice is still the same. The primary reason to add another dog should never be because we think we know what our original dog wants. He may well be all of those things above, but he cannot tell us, so we don’t know for sure.

What we do know for sure is how we feel. So if a person really wants another dog then get another dog. If only it was that simple!



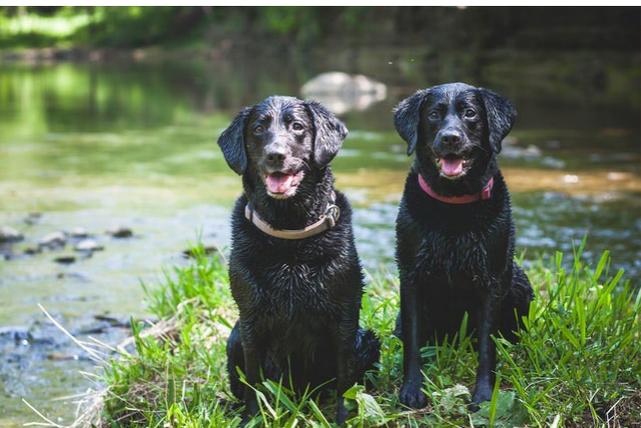
Once the decision has been made to add another dog, the work begins. Deciding whether to add a girl to an original boy or vice versa, or whether to get the same sex. If one or either of them is or will be neutered. All of that has a part to play in the successful addition of a new canine family member and should be researched thoroughly before hand.

Sarah Whitehead talks about this on one of her esteemed courses and is currently working on a webinar to help owners decide which sex would be best for them.

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Research done, a pup has been reserved. The day comes that you bring the pup home. Now the real work begins. The puppy is small and cute and will need you, but so does your original dog. His world is about to be turned upside down and he has to make adjustments. Our job is to ease that transition.

I believe it's a complete myth that the older dog will teach the younger, or put the pup in its place. You teach, you are responsible for the things they learn, not the original dog. All dogs have different levels of tolerance. Sometimes we can mistake this tolerance for acceptance. But by really understanding the dynamics between two dogs, we can learn the difference.



As humans who can read and research and reason, we have many more tools available to us than a dog. If we are not there to guide and teach our dogs, they have to rely on instinct. For example, we can teach our dogs to accept treats in a calm and polite manner. Left alone with treats and no guidance, instinct would kick in and one dog would succeed in getting more treats than the other. Not necessarily from a dominance point of view, one may simply be quicker and more agile or have better eyesight.

So what can we do? We referee. The pup will naturally overstep all the boundaries. He will have learned some behaviours from his siblings and mother, but much of that will also be dependent on the breeder and their involvement. I find it best to assume that the pup knows nothing and needs to be taught from day one, what is acceptable and what is not.

I often see young pups boisterous in play with older dogs, and I hear owners say "oh the older dog doesn't mind" and this is tolerance. The older dog may well be tolerating the rude behaviour of the pup, but the day will come where the original dog will reach the end of that tolerance. We must avoid that happening.

If the pup tries to play bitey face with the older dog, then we must interrupt that behaviour and redirect that behaviour onto a more appropriate toy.

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Play fighting. I have mixed feelings on this and the phrase that springs to mind is my own mother saying "it will end in tears" and "I've told you once, don't come running to me when it all goes wrong".

I don't agree with play fighting without supervision. I always step in and redirect the play with toys, tug ropes or a time out. Sometimes I interrupt the play fights and redirect the dogs into a short training session.

Snuffle mats and baby gates are essential purchases. When it all gets too rough, however much the dogs seem to be enjoying it, I'll ring the metaphorical playtime bell, and bring them back to a calmer level. One in one room with a snuffle mat and one in another.

Sleep is massively important to dogs. Not just pups but all dogs. They really aren't designed to be awake and on the go all day. They need rest periods. I've seen dogs (and children) who seem adamant that they do not need a nap, but after five minutes are flat out snoring their heads off. That's our decision to make for them, with their best interests at heart. Just as we would put a baby down for a nap.

Some older dogs are very good at taking themselves off to a quiet corner for a snooze, other dogs are too afraid to settle as they may miss out on something. I think the young call that FOMO! But whichever type your dog is, they do need to settle during the day as well as at night.

In short, you have to be the original dog's advocate. Recognise what is important and step in to interrupt any rude behaviours.

In the event that your original dog displays inappropriate behaviour towards the pup, then even more work is required! Lots of rewards for any positive interaction or even nonchalance. The original dog needs to feel secure and will need something to occupy him while attention is given to the youngster. He needs to learn that good things happen in the presence of the young one.

I find that most dogs are sociable creatures, and when all goes well, with time and effort, they'll soon be snuggling up together. Sadly for you, that might mean that you're not the being they come to first for a cuddle anymore, which is another important thing to consider when adding another dog to your household.

Thank you to Katy Guy for this article.

You can find out more about Katy here:

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