

## **CHOOSING A SECOND DOG**

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Adding a second dog to your family can be a fun project for all. With a few simple guidelines a good match can be made.

Before starting the search for your new dog it helps to make an accurate assessment of your present dog's personality. With that profile in mind you can then search for a compatible companion, remembering that not all dogs like each other.

When considering breeds, remember some breeds of dog are more assertive and less tolerant of other dogs. Other breeds coexist peacefully in packs. Research your breeds and don't put two breeds with attitude together; ensure future calm by adding a more easy-going breed.

If your dog is young and well socialized, it will be easy to find a companion for him. He could live with a wide range of personality types. However, choose a dog to match your young dog's energy level, so neither of them are overwhelmed by the other. Also, consider your dog's play style, some dogs like physical play, others prefer chase games. Don't put a delicate, polite dog with one that likes to wrestle!

If your dog is more mature, but still likes to play with other dogs, look for a dog of the opposite sex if possible, for long term compatibility. Playing in the dog park is different from sharing your home environment with another dog. Many mature dogs are much more tolerant of dogs of the opposite sex, especially if they are younger.

A much more thoughtful search will be required for the mature dog that likes some dogs, but not others. A dog of the opposite sex is now essential. Choose a younger, more easy-going dog, who will be respectful of the established dogs routines. The pickier your dog is in its relationships with other dogs the more carefully you need to choose. An ideal companion for this type of dog is a younger dog who is polite in its play but has good "bounce back" if reprimanded by the older dog. Help from a dog trainer could be useful with this match.

Sometimes people choose to get a puppy as their dog ages. In some cases this can be very stressful to an older dog that is not physically capable of dealing with a young puppy. It can also be extremely bad for a puppy who may learn that he can get away with being rude to an older dog and thus develop antisocial behavior with other dogs. Take a moment to think! Can your older dog deal with this amazing change in lifestyle. Are you being fair to the older dog who is now enjoying his retirement. However, if your older dog is still reasonably fit, a gentle puppy or younger companion can sometimes "put a little life into the old dog"!! Remember to give the older dog lots of breaks from the puppy. Sometimes a more settled respectful adult companion can be found and is a

good compromise. Never punish an adult dog if he reprimands a puppy, it is good for the puppy to learn to respect adult dogs.

If you are looking for a friend for a dog with a history of behavior problems (e.g. excessive shyness, aggression to other dogs or people, territorial barking), avoid getting a puppy. Puppies are heavily influenced by the adult dog they grow up with and may easily learn the same anti-social behaviors. You may end up with two dogs with the same problem. Instead, choose a stable, friendly adult dog with excellent skills in the area your dog has a problem with. The new dog's more sociable manners may positively influence your own dog and give him more confidence. If your dog is very shy and submissive be careful not to get a dog who will bully him. A confident gentle companion would work best.

What about raising two puppies together so they always have a playmate? Usually, this is not a good idea unless you have an **extraordinary** amount of time. You will need to spend time every day with each puppy individually, or the two of them will bond with each other rather than with you. Then you will have trouble getting them to listen to you. Instead, if your intention is to have two dogs, get one puppy and obedience train it, then get your second puppy at least a year later. Never adopt two same sex siblings, this combination often ends up in conflict when they mature. It is a misconception that two puppies will reduce your workload by exercising each other. **TWO PUPPIES ARE THREE TIMES THE WORK!**

Expect a few squabbles when you take your new dog home, dogs don't instantly fall in love any more than people do. A growl or curled lip is their only means of communication. Pick up all toys and food bowls until their relationship is worked out.

Although the majority of dogs can be found a good companion, there are a small number of dogs who need to remain in single dog households. If your adult dog is very possessive of you or other resources e.g. food or toys, he will probably do better as an only dog. It is completely normal for some adult dogs to prefer the company of their human family and not want to share them.

A little thought and planning before deciding on your second dog will avoid conflict in the future. When you have your new dog, some basic obedience training will establish you as the "pack leader" and avoid competition among pack members! Two dogs together can be a joy to watch with their antics as they develop their relationship with each other as well as with you.