

# Dogs greeting dogs – how to have a successful encounter



In a perfect world, our dogs would always be thrilled to encounter other animals, but we know that things are not always that easy. I work with many dogs that are rescues that have social anxiety issues. They need time to adjust and learn that the world is not a scary place. It does not help when people let their animals and children run up to these scared, confused souls.

You have the responsibility to not only keep your dog safe but also to prevent injury to other dog and their owners.

## How to ensure successful encounters

The most important part is to let your dog know that you are stable leader that he can count on you to protect him during trying times. Watch how wolves work together. When something threatens their pack the leader steps to the front and takes charge of the situation. The pack knows that he has the situation under control and this gives them stability and peace of mind. You can do the same for your dog.

1. When working with a reactive or scared dog, be aware of your surroundings. If you see a dog off leash, calmly move away from the situation. Turn and walk away if you have time.

2. If this is not possible, remember not to get tense and nervous. Your dog will feed off your emotions and body language. Dogs take their cues from humans, if you remain calm it helps them to remain calm.
3. Tightening up on the leash, waving your arms or screaming will only exacerbate the situation. This tells your dog that something is really wrong. Keep your leash loose and calmly step in front of your dog.
4. Let the offending dog owner know that your dog is not friendly with other pets. Use a commanding voice but do not sound panicked or shrill.
5. If the dog continues to approach put your hand out in the stop position, step forward one or two paces and say, STOP or BACK in a deep, calm commanding voice.
6. If all else fails and the dog approaching is aggressive, and you cannot stop the attack from happening then DROP YOUR LEASH. Your dog will fall back on his natural instinct of flight or fight. Holding your leash will only hinder your dog from being able to get out of the situation or protect himself. Immediately call 911. There are leash laws in most states and the offending owner should have a chance to learn about them.

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## **How to approach and greet a dog**

You're walking down the street and see a man taking a stroll with his charming puppy. Do you know the proper greeting etiquette?



First things first – you should ask the dog's human companion if it is okay to approach. Once you're given the clear:

1. Get on the dog's level and extend your hand palm down to be sniffed.
2. Scratch the pup under the chin or stroke the dog gently on the chest and shoulders. Work your way to the top of the dogs head.
3. With some dogs, it is best to remain standing and use the same method described above.
4. Do not hover over the dog leaning over their head and encroaching on their space.
5. Do not put your face directly into the dogs as this can cause a negative reaction and it is a sure fire way to get bit if you make the dog feel threatened.

Most often, people's natural instinct is to reach in and pat dogs on the head – often while leaning over the dog and even staring into its eyes. This is a very unnatural act for a dog. Have you ever seen a dog pat another dog on the head? Probably not unless it was a trained behavior. We have to refer to the rule of do not do anything to your dog that another dog would not do to them.

This does not mean that you should not teach your pup to find this behavior to be pleasurable, it just means that you should strive to make it enjoyable.

## People greeting your dog

Suppose that someone comes up to greet your dog without *your* permission. It is best to train your dog to accept this kind of behavior, but greeters do not always know the best way to behave around animals. Your best response is to calmly step in front of your dog to block access.