

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.

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.

Great games for training and play

Structured play is a great way to deepen your bond with your pet, reinforce positive behaviors and exercise your pet's brain. While the games below are written to be dog-specific, they actually can work well with cats, too!



Using simple games to train your dog will make learning fun and rewarding. Many folks approach dog training with militant passion. They allot 30 minutes or more to walking their dogs through one boring exercise after another. Guess what? This is boring for the dog, too! And not much fun.

Here are some games to play that will reinforce training behaviors and commands:

- [The Name Game](#)
- [Watch me game](#)
- [Puppy ping-pong game](#)

- [Hide-n-Seek Game](#)
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How to find a great veterinarian

Much like the quest for the “right” human doctor, finding a veterinarian that you trust is a critical pet owner task. If you like your veterinarian (and how the vet’s office operates), you will be more likely to keep up with annual checkups and vaccinations, and you will be more likely to seek advice if your pet develops new symptoms.



You are your pet’s best advocate, and your vet should understand this and seek your input about changes in your pet over time.

You need to ask many of the same questions about your pet’s potential doctor that you would ask about a personal doctor:

- Is the doctor qualified to treat your pet?
- How do current and past clients rate the doctor’s performance?
- Does the doctor’s personality and style work with you and your pet?

QUALIFICATIONS

- If you’ve found your vet through a reputable source, chances are that he or she is licensed. If you are in

doubt, contact your state's Veterinary Licencing board to confirm the vet's status.

- You can call the Veterinary School the veterinary graduated from to confirm his or her status.
- Ask the prospective vet to provide information about specialized training and continuous education strategies for the vet and the vet's office. This can tell you how progressive and current the vet's practice will be.

NOTE: Your prospective vet should be very willing to share information about his or her training, affiliation and credentials. If that isn't happening, it should be a big red flag.

REPUTATION

- One of the best ways to find your next vet is to ask friends, family, breeders and other folks-in-the-know for a recommendation.
- You and your pet will deal with all of the office staff and vet techs as much or more than the actual veterinarian, so be sure to ask about the entire experience with the veterinarian's office.
- Many online service directories allow clients to leave reviews and recommendations. Do a quick internet search on your veterinarian candidate and see what pops up. Keep in mind that a bad experience may be due to personality conflicts or special circumstances, but if you see a trend of not-so-positive comments, you should steer clear.

STYLE & PERSONALITY

Both you and your pet should feel comfortable with your vet and vet's office. (Okay, most cats and some dogs will never be okay with a trip to the doctor. In that case, at least you should feel good about the visit.)

- Gruff, clinical and knowledgeable or social, chatty and engaging? Do you want your veterinarian to be the all knowing expert or a helpful resource? Keep this in mind as you research potential vets.
- Some folks want a deeper relationship with their pet's doctor. They want to visit and discuss every symptom and behavior. Other folks want to get it over with – no chit chat. Let's just say that there is not much more annoying than dealing with someone who is behaving the exact opposite of what you want.
- Ask about the standard length of appointments, emergency service options and hours of operation. This gives you a sense of how available and responsive the vet will be.

There are two doctors at my vet's office. One is chatty and progressive; she likes to research things online and is up on all the latest vet news. The other is much more traditional; he says "this is the way we treat XYZ. period." Both are capable and engaging veterinarians, but they probably appeal to different parts of their customer base.

REMEMBER: If you lose faith in your veterinarian or get a bad vibe, the good news is that it is easier to switch your vet than it is to switch your human doctor. Try not to feel guilty if this happens to you, there is no one-veterinarian-fits-all mandate.

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While deciding to leave may be a challenge, there are only two steps to switching vets!

- [Find a new veterinarian.](#)
- Get a copy of your pet's health records to take to your new vet. This can be the hard part – especially if you have a long-standing relationship with your old vet – because it involves openly admitting your defection. The good news is that the new vet's office will often take care of this bit for you if you just ask. They want your business!

Since moving to the Austin area over ten years ago, my pets and I “went through” four vets before settling on our current doctor. Here's why we changed:

Vet #1: I saw their office near my home and made an appointment. At the time, I had two dogs. We sat in the waiting room – which was a zoo – for about 30 minutes. We entered the exam room and waited some more. Once the vet arrived, the annual checkups for two dogs new to their practice took 15 minutes total. Little discussion or desire to understand me or my pets. (We only went once!)

Vet #2: Again, I went with geographical proximity. This vet's office was saner and much more organized. There were two vets – husband and wife. The wife was nice and engaging; the husband a complete curmudgeon (and cold to both humans

and dogs). It just never felt right.

Vet #3: Recommended by my very particular neighbor. The vet was pretty kooky but clearly loved dogs and her job. The office was pleasant and organized. They knew me and my dogs. Nice. Then, I had two dogs in a row go through wacky illnesses. For me, this vet did not do a good job of supporting me or treating my pets while they were in crisis. My problems may have been completely circumstantial, and admittedly my dogs had uncommon health issues.

Vet #4: Long story short, my first random-illness dog ended up having a series of seizures early in the morning, and I needed a vet that opened early. I was sent to the new vet. Showed up at 7:30 with a very, very sick dog. This vet and her office took us in immediately and helped quickly. The vet read through all of Daisy's health records and went to work. Ultimately, there was nothing she could do, but the office was very supportive. I went back to vet #3 until the next dog health crisis hit. Unhappy with how things were going at vet #3, I remembered how knowledgeable and progressive vet #4 was and switched immediately. The office knows me and my dogs; the vet remembers me and my pet's history (and my family's pet's history); and the office is busy but well-organized. I don't spend a lot of time waiting around, and they can always fit me in in a pinch. This is the best vet I've ever had, and I recommend them often.

Remember that you have options if you lose faith in your veterinarian. When you take your pets to the doctor, you should feel confident and comfortable. Your vet should be engaged and informed.

Recommended puppy toys

Just walk into a pet store and you are besieged with toy options for your puppy. Never fear! Below we provide an assortment of chewing, tugging and brain-using play options.

As a general rule, dog toys fall into 2 categories:

- **Free play** – These belong to the dogs, and they are allowed to play with them at anytime. However, your dog must allow you to retrieve a toy at any time – and the pup must give the toy up willingly. No object guarding should ever be allowed.
- **Supervised play** – These toys belong to the two-legged family members but are shared with the dogs. We decide when we take these out to play, and we decide when the game ends. It's a good idea to end the game just a bit before your dog wears out and gets bored with it. This leaves him wanting just a bit more and makes him excited to continue the game at another time.

CHEW & TEETHING TOYS

These toys are great when your puppy is teething. I like to freeze the teething toys as it has a slight numbing effect from the cold and they get relief from the pain. I used the same method on my childrens teething rings and they all seemed to like it.

- **Kong:** These are great stuffed with peanut butter and treats then frozen for use by teething puppies. If you are going to be gone for a long period in a day fill these with your dogs meal and they can feed themselves and it gives them a great outlet for their energy.



- **Nylabone:** These come in all shapes and sizes and my dogs love them.



- **Chilly Bones:** These give true relief to a teething puppy.



- **Teething Rings:** These come in a wide variety of designs. Definitely freeze these, your pup will enjoy them even more.



LEARNING TOYS

You can find many toys that will not only alleviate boredom but they will help your furry friend learn to problem solve and think on their own. This can be extremely beneficial when training your dog as a dog that can reason will easily understand the behaviors that you are showing them.

These come in many varieties and can provide hours of fun for your pet. Just fill them with treats or use them to feed your dog their meal it will keep them occupied while you are busy.



When playing with my dogs I keep it simple. Balls, ropes, frisbees, sticks and empty water bottles make great toys for interacting with my pets. For the dogs that will fetch but not return the item you can make a great training toy by simply putting a hole through a ball and attaching a long piece of clothesline rope through it. In this way the dog cannot run away with the ball as you have control at all times.

It does not matter what method you decide to use as long as you remember to keep it positive and make it a fun experience for your friend.

Buyer's guide to dog bowls

There are as many choices for dog dishes as we have for our own dinnerware. So many designer patterns and just fun bowls to choose from that making a decision can be difficult. Choose a bowl based on your dog's needs.



DOG FOOD - © Ian Maclellan | Dreamstime.com

- For our larger friends, an elevated bowl is much better for digestion. Vary the height based on your dog's height. The optimal height is six inches lower than the dog's "withers" (aka back) for larger breeds and four inches lower for smaller breeds.

- If your pup has long floppy ears, tapered bowls are available to help keep his ears clean and dry.
- If your dog has a tendency to gulp food down all at once, this can cause a variety of health issues. Not to worry – there are bowls that are designed to help alleviate this problem by slowing down consumption. The JW pet skid slow feed bowl is one example. (A freebie solution to this problem is to place another bowl or large object into your pet’s current bowl; your dog will have to work harder to get to the food – and therefore will eat slower!)

So, now you’ve picked a style of bowl. Let’s choose a type of material.

- Plastic bowls may be easily chewed and carried around, but they’re lightweight and portable.
- Metal bowls are easy to clean and not really chew toys but be aware that some dogs do not like to see their reflection while they’re eating.
- Heavy ceramic type bowls are especially nice if your dog tends to play with his empty bowl (or likes to carry it around a la Snoopy when he is hungry).

We’re pretty sure that your dog will not care about how pretty or color coordinated his food and water bowls are, but you might! Most dogs can’t read either, and would be perfectly happy to eat and drink out of bowls that say “cat”.

Buyer’s guide to grooming

Grooming is a very important part of your dog's life. Learning young to tolerate bathing, clipping their nails and brushing their coats and teeth is essential to long term health and well being. With a few simple supplies and some patience and effort on your part grooming can be enjoyable for you and your new friend.



BRUSHES

A good brush that is suitable to your dog's coat is crucial in the grooming process.

- Thick coated dogs will need a pin brush as well as a soft brush to finish their coats.
- Short coated dogs do well with a zoom groom and a softer brush.

BATH TIME

- When bathing your dog be sure to use a dog-appropriate product. Human shampoo is much too strong for our four legged friends. Use a shampoo designed for your pet's sensitive skin.
- Use specialty shampoos to address specific concerns such as dry skin, shedding and allergies.
- Keep an ear cleaner dryer solution on hand. Use this after a bath to keep down ear infections.

NAILS

- Get a good pair of toe nail clippers to begin with. If your nail clippers are not large enough or sharp enough it can make your dog uncomfortable with the process. Dull clippers will crack the nails and cause your dog discomfort.

- Have some quick stop or other blood coagulating product to stop the nail from bleeding if you inadvertently cut into the quick.

TEETH

- Use doggie toothpaste when you brush your pets teeth as it does not have to be rinsed out and people paste has a tendency to upset their stomachs. Toothpaste designed for our pets also come in yummy flavors like beef, chicken, and peanut butter. This makes my gang look forward to teeth-cleaning time.
- You can use a regular toothbrush or you can purchase a finger toothbrush to help you teach your dog to allow you to brush their teeth.

Buyer's guide to pet ids

Keeping proper identification on your pet greatly increases the chance of finding your furry friend when lost. According to the American Humane Society only about 17% of dogs and 2% of cats ever find their way back from shelters to their original owners.



There are several simple ways to improve the odds finding your pet if it ever gets lost.

1. Keep a up to date ID tag on your pet at all times.
2. Micro-chip your dog to insure that if it is turned into any shelter there is a clear way to contact you.
3. Register your pet in your city or county.

Several new services are springing up, as well.

The [Virtual Leash](#) service offered by Dog Tag Art creates a web page for your pet that includes unlimited emergency contacts that can be instantly notified when someone has found your lost pet. Users can contact you via phone, email, Twitter or text message. This service costs \$1 per month, but you must purchase one of their tags for about \$15. Your pet's unique web address is printed on the tag, and it is very simple to keep your contact info current.

There are approximately 9.6 million pets euthanized every year because their owners cannot be located.