

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.