

## Great First Impressions—Parallel Walking for Introducing Dogs

One of the safest, most effective ways to introduce dogs to each other is parallel walking. This means that the dogs are walking, on leash, in the same direction with their handlers.

### Why parallel walking?

For some dogs, meeting face to face can be stressful as it may feel confrontational, intense, or too direct. Some dogs have difficulty with polite greetings—they be tense and rigid (a vibe other dogs may misinterpret as a threat), or they may be super excited (a dog that's rudely jumping all over another dog can be really off-putting and cause the other dog to react negatively). Parallel walking can help ease all of these potential difficulties.

Having the dogs walk together, on leash, in the same direction:

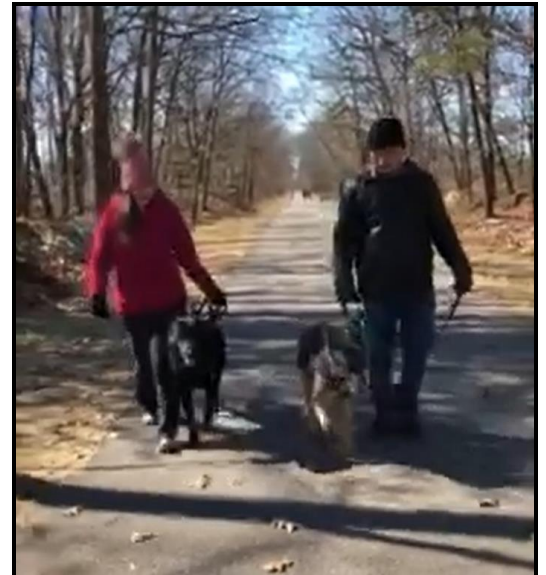
- Keeps them moving and not so focused on each other (diffuses tension or excitement)
- Allows them slowly, safely acclimate to each other (they can glance at each other, sniff each other briefly, and have time and space to read each other's body language)
- Prevents the opportunity for them to engage in inappropriate greeting behaviors (e.g., mounting, rude prolonged sniffing, aggressive posturing)
- Allows the handlers to set the pace and tone of the greeting (by walking pace and how close the dogs get to each other)

### How to do it

What the accompanying video to this short article:



[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qr4gVf\\_Q74&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qr4gVf_Q74&feature=youtu.be)



Cora and Beau are meeting for the first time. Beau (the young black German Shepherd on the left with the female handler in the red coat) and Cora (the German Shepherd mix with the male handler in the black hat) demonstrate parallel walking. We started with the dogs on the outside (handlers walking next to each other) and now have the dogs on the inside so that they are next to each other (but still allowing them space). When you watch the video, notice the brief interactions (sniffing and glancing at each other) as they walk. We are providing them an opportunity to get to know each other safely and slowly as we walk.

As the interactions continue to go well, our next steps might be to some more direct, short-duration on-leash greetings, and then longer greetings (both on and off leash). Check out this short read on next steps for greetings: <https://positively.com/contributors/how-to-introduce-your-dog-to-visiting-dogs/>