

Are 2 Dogs Better Than 1? It All Depends

There are many variables to consider before adding a second dog to your household. And there's no guarantee that the two dogs will get along. Here's what you need to consider before taking the plunge and how to boost your odds that they'll be best buddies.

Reviewed by Dr. Becker

STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- Two well-matched dogs can become best of friends, providing each other with companionship and a built-in playmate
- When dogs are young, having another dog around can also help with emotional development, and a well-behaved older dog can help a younger dog catch on to the rules of your household
- Adding another dog to your home can also help your dogs to stay fit, as they may be more active when in each other's company
- Not all dogs get along; generally speaking, dogs of the opposite sex tend to get along better than same-sex pairs
- If you do decide that more than one dog is right for you, take your time finding the right fit for your family

Editor's Note: This article is a reprint. It was originally published March 29, 2019.

If you have one dog at home that you love, you may consider adding another dog to your family to compound the cuddling and companionship that your pet provides. But while it's true that two dogs equal double the cuteness and affection, it also equals double the pet hair, double the veterinary costs and double the trouble, especially if they don't get along.

There are practical things to consider, like whether you have the space, time and finances to care for another pet, but it's critical to also keep your current dog in mind. Not all dogs get along and adding another dog to your home will likely affect your dog's current behaviors, for better or for worse. Yet, in many circumstances, having two dogs can certainly be better than having one.

The Benefits of Having 2 Dogs

Two well-matched dogs can become best of friends, providing each other with companionship and a built-in playmate. For dogs that will be left alone for several hours during the day, having a puppy pal to socialize with can mean the difference between destructive boredom-driven behaviors and a happy, well-stimulated or contented pooch. It can even help with **separation anxiety**.

When dogs are young, having another dog around can also help with emotional development, and a well-behaved older dog can help a younger dog catch on to the rules of your household. A calm dog can also provide an excellent role model for an anxious pup.

The tiny shelter pup became much calmer when he was around his “big brother,” showing how two dogs can help each other out socially and behaviorally. The opposite is also true, though, in that two anxious dogs put together may only serve to fan the flames, leading to worse behavior instead of better.

Adding another dog to your home can also help your dogs to stay fit, as they may be more active when in each other’s company. A young puppy may also entice an older dog to get more exercise than he would otherwise.

Which Dogs Get Along Best?

Considering there are millions of dogs in need of homes in U.S. animal shelters right now, adopting a second dog is also a humane thing to do, as it helps to save another life. But it does nobody any favors if you bring a dog into your home that can’t stay because he doesn’t get along with your other pets. The good news is many shelters allow you to “try before you buy” to make sure you have a match made in heaven.

Generally speaking, dogs of the opposite sex tend to get along better than same-sex pairs. With two males, there may be issues regarding social status, with the dominant dog becoming overly dominant and the submissive dog living in a stressful state of not being top dog. Two females can also be a far-from-ideal combo, and one more likely to lead to serious fights.

In one study, household aggression between dogs most often involved same-sex pairs and, among them, 68% of the cases involved two females.¹ Two female terriers may be an especially risky choice, due to gameness, a trait that may cause them to continue attacking another dog even after it surrenders, leading to a fatal outcome.

There are always exceptions, of course, but in general if you’re considering two dogs for your household, choose dogs of the opposite sex to maintain harmony. Often, larger males and smaller females work well together in the same household, though you can also consider dogs of the same breed.

Another consideration is littermate syndrome, a somewhat controversial notion that two littermates adopted together bond intensely with each other, to the exclusion of their human family. This doesn’t happen in every case, but it’s something to consider, as is fighting among littermates, which can be severe. One pup can also develop an unhealthy emotional dependence on the other, becoming highly anxious if he’s separated from his sibling.

If you do adopt littermates, you can help them adjust and grow into well-adjusted dogs, as well as increase bonding with you, by using separate crates, training sessions and playtime, so each dog has a chance to grow and develop on its own.

Let Your Dogs Be ‘Only Dogs’ — at Least for a Little While

Many pet owners live harmoniously with multiple dogs, but even if your pets are best friends it’s a good idea to give them some alone time, at least once in a while. If your dogs are forced to be together at all times, small irritations and stress can result in major blow-ups.

In multiple-dog households, it’s important to take your dogs out for walks on their own — not every time, even just once a week can be beneficial. You’ll also want to make time to play with each dog individually at times and, certainly, give each dog access to separate areas of the house, so they’re able to choose when they want to be alone and when they’d prefer to be together.

If you do decide that more than one dog is right for you, take your time finding the right fit for your family and, before it’s time to bring him home, read these **10 tips for new dog-to-dog introductions**.

Sources and References

¹ [Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association March 15, 2011, Vol. 238, No. 6, Pages 731-740](#)
