

# Teaching dogs to greet each other politely

**Pass-by method:** This is especially helpful for dogs that are reactive to other dogs and dogs that tend to pull in excitement toward other dogs!

This is a training session set-up with a friendly, non-reactive dog for your dog to practice with, but you could also do this while walking your dog in public if you have time to explain to others what you want them to do before the dogs get too close to each other and you sense their dog is friendly and they can follow your directions.

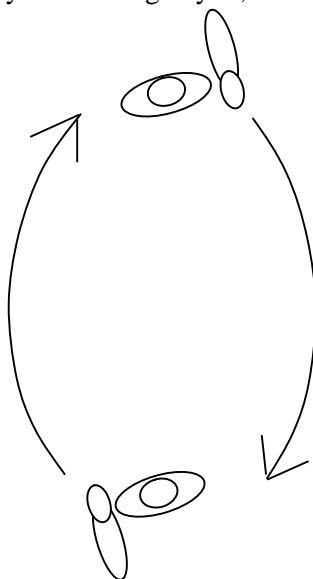
The distances you will use to start depend on your dog's behavior. You will want the dog to be ABLE to give you their attention. If they are too focused on the presence of the other dog to do that, you might have to increase the distance between the dogs. If that means starting at opposite ends of a football field, then that's where you start.

## **Step 1:**

Dogs are in heel position at each handler's left side. The handler's will have some type of treat their dog REALLY loves and that they can deliver in small amounts almost continuously, one piece right after another.

The handlers will not be walking in a straight line, but instead, put a curve in their path as indicated in the diagram below. This will start to mimic the friendly approach that two socially adept dogs will do. Direct/straight line approaches tend to be "rude," assertive and possibly aggressive in dog language. But some young dogs haven't figured this out. ☺ Curving the approach will start to teach the dogs this dog language.

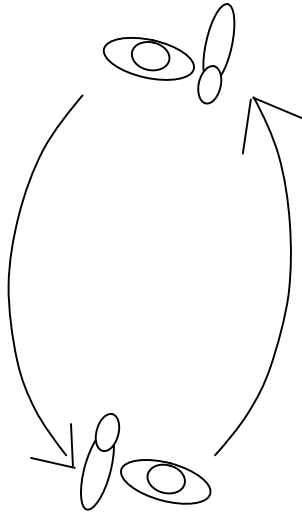
The dogs will be on the "outside" of the curve and the handlers will be feeding their dogs through out the entire pass till they have traded places. The feeding should be used as a reward for eye contact from the dog with the handler. If eye contact cannot be established and maintained, you may have started too close together. Feel free to use verbal encouragement and praise to get and maintain your dog's focus. But if the dog loses focus and pulls toward the other dog, simply start the next pass at a greater distance from the other dog and put more distance between them during the pass. Even though they are looking at you, the dog knows the other dog is there!



On future passes, you will be getting a bit closer together. The number of repetitions it takes to get the people nearly side by side in the center will depend on how far apart you were during the first passes and the dog's behavior. Be sure to use your dog's willingness to focus on you (or lack there of) as your gauge to tell if you have moved too close together too fast. Once the humans are able to pass close together, move to step 2.

## **Step 2:**

This process will be similar to the first step, except that now the dogs are on the inside of the curves. You'll start farther apart, but be sure you can keep the dog's focus or you'll need to be even farther apart for a few passes. Gradually you will be moving closer and closer as you do more pass-bys. Again, use your dog's behavior as the gauge.



By now, the dogs have had an opportunity to see that the other dog is not going to attack them and hopefully has not even looked at them (even if they have been keeping their focus on you, they can see the other dog with their peripheral vision.) This helps both dogs be more at ease and for the overly friendly dogs; it teaches them that they CAN stay focused on you in the presence of another dog. It also gives them a chance to smell the scent of the other dog without getting in the uncomfortable range for either dog. When the dogs are able to pass right next to each other (while maintaining focus on the handler and getting treats for that), you're ready for step 3.

## **Step 3:**

Now, when the dogs get next to each other in the center of the pass (still an arch, just more of a shallow curve) you'll stop for 3 seconds and stop treating to see if the dogs want to sniff each other. Be sure it's NOT more than 3 seconds on this first stop. Most dogs have little or no interest in the other dog at this point because they have smelled their scent already and observed their relaxed body language. After 3 seconds (the humans can count this out loud) both will continue on their way simultaneously. For the majority of dogs, once they can get to this point, they will not have an issue with the other dog when they see/smell them again. But they may need a few pass-bys when they meet the dog again (on a different day) to remind them that they know this dog and it's not going to hurt them or rudely invade their space. Of course this requires that the owners monitor their dog and where his eyes are looking and nose is going to be SURE there is no attack or rude behavior or you might be back to square one.

If you see your dog holding eye contact toward another dog for more than 3 seconds at any time, you'll want to interrupt that eye contact (call the dog, walk in front of them, whatever) because direct eye contact for longer than a few seconds can induce a fight when the dogs get within bite range. Also watch for any body stiffness, stillness or tension which can indicate a lunge or fight may be about to happen, especially when the dogs are within bite range of each other.

After repeating the above steps with several different dogs, your dog is likely to be more relaxed around other dogs. This exercise helps the dogs learn how to greet properly/politely and reduces anxiety which aids in a proper relaxed greeting. It also helps the owner relax and not shorten up on the leash and send worry right down the leash to the dog. If at anytime during the above steps a dog feels the need to bark at the other dog-- that is information that you moved too close too fast. Simply back away and do the next several passes farther apart.

**Another option that can help dogs is the “follow” method:**

This works especially well for dogs that are overly enthusiastic greeters. It lets them get the visual and scent info they need before they get close to the other dog. And often by the time they have seen and smelled the other dog in this way, the greeting is MUCH more relaxed and controlled. This also works well for dogs that are nervous about other dogs (start with the shy dog in the “follow” position).

Have one dog follow the other to let him/her see and get the scent of the dog in the lead. Then switch directions so that the dog that had been following is now the one in the lead. Gradually close the distance between the lead dog and the following dog till they are walking side by side (with as much room laterally between them as needed). Having the dogs going the same direction is less confrontational than if they approach each other from opposite directions as outlined in the method above.

The distance walked does not need to be far, just enough for the paths to overlap a bit. If the lead dog stops (to sniff or mark for example), the dog that is following should be stopped as well to maintain distance. Then let the following dog pass that interesting spot to smell the marking left by the lead dog.

In the diagram, the part of the paths that overlap provide the dogs the most scent of the other dog. The dog/handler shown at the top follows the top loop and the dog/handler shown on the bottom follows the bottom loop. Distances covered between the change of direction can be varied as needed.

