

Twice as Nice

Multiple dogs: Double the fun...or double the trouble?

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The decision to add a second dog to your household is a tricky one. While there is no guarantee that a new addition will bring bliss to your household, there are a few methods that can maximize your chances for a happy canine family.

Use the Force. Let a puppy play Luke Skywalker to your older dogs Obi-Wan Kenobi. The puppy will absorb everything from guest-greeting manners to leash etiquette from your been-there-done-that dog. (Likewise, the puppy will also pick up any negative habits, so bone up on your adult dogs behavior before you bring a puppy home.)

While this doesn't mean you can shirk puppy training responsibilities, a well-mannered older dog functions as a marvelous canine teacher, says Pat Miller, a certified dog trainer and author of *The Power of Positive Dog Training* (Wiley, 2001). If the first dog is well-trained and well-behaved, the new pup will learn appropriate behaviors by copying the first.

Avoid sibling rivalry. Don't get two dogs from the same litter. Siblings mature at the same rate and can vie for the role of top dog, especially if no other dog is on the scene. Same-sex littermates are a definite no-no. Littermates raised together are more likely to develop close relationships with each other than with the human family members, says Miller. This is not mentally healthy for them. Raising one puppy is a lot of work. Raising two puppies is at least four times as much work.

Opposites attract. Increase the chances of a blissful match by mixing sexes. If your current dog is female, shop for a male. This mix is especially helpful if you end up with two dogs with similar inclinations toward dominance.

Think complementary temperaments. A high-strung dog doesn't need a high-energy pal upping the anxiety quotient. Temper extreme characteristics by getting a second dog with opposite breed tendencies. While a new puppy might not soothe an excitable dog or embolden a shy one, getting a dog with an opposite attitude may bring a sense of balance to your household.

That new puppy could remain a part of your family for 15 years, so take the time to research and find the right puppy for your household. A little work now could save many headaches and even heartache down the road.

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