

DOG-TO-DOG INTERACTIONS: DIFFERENCES IN DOG SOCIAL BEHAVIORS

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Dogs come in all shapes, sizes and dispositions, including how they interact with other dogs. Some dogs love everyone they meet. More commonly, dogs are tolerant or selective when it comes to how they play and socialize with other pups. And some dogs will have had a scary experience that will impact how they feel about others.

Age may also affect how your dog interacts with other pups. Some dogs will be outgoing and playful puppies that mature into dogs that are selective or only tolerant of others. Older dogs may lose the desire to romp around with the younger crowd.

We separate dog social interactions into four categories; however, there is a great variety of behaviors within each group. Use this guide to help understand your dog's interactions with others.

- **Dog Social Dogs:** These dogs enjoy the company of all other dogs and will play well with even the rudest playmates. In some cases, they will find playmates they do not like, but often, they will shake it off and move on quickly. Dogs that fall into this category are quite rare.
- **Dog Tolerant:** These dogs are normally indifferent or friendly to others on leash and are often very relaxed when meeting new dogs. They may choose not to play or may decide that they don't like to share certain things with other dogs, but for the most part, they are unphased by the presence of other canines. They may not love certain dogs, especially rude players and may correct puppies for silly interactions, but in general, they can easily tolerate being around others. These dogs are also often referred to as mildly dog selective.
- **Dog Selective:** These dogs will have some dog friends but may not want to hit the dog park (see our handout on 'Keeping Your Dog Busy' for ideas on how to keep them tired and happy). They may dislike and have a short fuse for some dogs while having a high tolerance for others. The dogs they dislike may be others of the same sex, rough players or certain colors/ breeds. These dogs often can do well with supervised play with specific friends. There are many reasons why dogs will be selective. Playstyle often factors heavily. Some dogs like to play by wrestling and having full-body contact. In contrast, others prefer to play by chasing or just hanging out and sniffing each other. It is okay when dogs are selective with their friends, but your job is to know your dog and find them the right friends (preferably not at the dog park).

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- **Dog Reactive:** These dogs often ignore or bark at other dogs on leash, behind a fence or when greeting. These dogs also respond to training well (see our handouts on leash training and dog reactivity). They often don't have dog friends but love their humans. Dog-reactive dogs have a very short fuse for other dogs, especially those with rude or rambunctious behavior. They often do not want to share their toys with other dogs and do best when heavily supervised around other dogs and should not visit the dog park. Please refer to our 'Creative Ways to Entertain Your Dog' handout for tips on exercise and mental stimulation for these pups.

No matter what category your dog falls into, it is very rare for a dog to enjoy the company of every dog they meet. For those that do not want or need the company of other dogs, don't fret – there are plenty of other social outlets for your dogs. Find what works for you and your pup. Dog-to-dog tolerance is flexible and determined by many factors including, but not limited to, the handler, training history and socialization efforts.

We are always here to help! You can find additional behavior and training resources at pasadenahumane.org/behavior.

Adapted from Northeast Animal Shelter



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