

Bringing Home the Bully

Rescue Welfare Trust Fund of the Bull Terrier Club of America

Maybe you already have a Bull Terrier that has brought such joy into your life that you decide if one is good, two will be better. Maybe you feel that your dog (of any breed) “needs a playmate”, thinking that all that energy could be expelled playing with another dog. Your dog enjoys the company of other dogs and usually plays well with others, so why not adopt a Bull Terrier companion for him/her?

Please take this decision very seriously and question your own motives about “why?”

If your dog gets along well with other dogs, it can be totally a different picture than actually living with another dog 24/7. Your dog could be content with being the center of your universe yet resent sharing the spotlight. After all, playing with a dog away from home is not the same as having another dog in your space. (Think about all your friends, how much you appreciate and enjoy them, yet neither of you would be happy living together.)

Consider the dog that needs his or her own family and home. They also have a history, and more often than not we don't know that background. If the dog has been in foster care long enough and evaluated by experienced care takers, we can make an educated assumption of the best possible environment for *that* dog. We can

assess the needs of *that* dog, and make every attempt to find the closest match that will ensure a successful lifetime adoption.

What we cannot predict is what *you and your family and your dog* will do when the new dog comes into your family.

Before you bring an additional dog into your life, consider the relationship you have with your current dog. Is he or she confident, demanding, protective, obedient, and jealous of your attention, obsessive with toys or food? Is your dog trained to obey simple obedience commands? If there are any behaviors that you consider needing some work, don't expect another dog to do this for you! It's up to you to train your bull terrier in such a way that he or she is predictable and trustworthy.

Once you have made the decision to apply for adoption of a Bull Terrier, be aware of the BTCA policies and application processes. If a dog is available that could be a possible good match for you and your family please is patient in working with the foster caretaker. No one knows this dog's individuality as well as the person caring for it. A meeting should be scheduled for you to bring your dog to meet the foster parent and maybe the dog. You may be asked to make more than one visit.

Once you have reached this point, the dogs should meet in a neutral territory; for example; not my house, not your house, both dogs on leash and under control. Let them meet and sniff, be aware of any body language that tell you if either one is uncomfortable. Walk away, spend a few minutes away from the others and evaluate without judgment what you have seen and felt. Re-introduce the dogs, again with close supervision! Never allow them off leash

together to check each other out. You will probably see a lot of sniffing and maybe some posturing, but watch silently and confidently, be alert to distress from either dog.

Again, separate them and each go your own way for a short time. Don't offer toys or food at this time. You may repeat this as many times as necessary until everyone is comfortable with each other.

This will give you a glimpse of how the individual personalities react to each other, at least in neutral territory.

It would wonderful to bring the new dog to the home of the potential family to visit, but due to distance of travel etc. this may not always be possible. If it is possible it will give you all the opportunity to see the "home dog's" reaction to the same new dog in its own environment.

If all goes well with the initial meeting, congratulations! The new adoptee must have a crate and both dogs be given ample time and space to enjoy their individual territory while being able to become acclimated to each other and all the changes it brings into the energy of the home. A common error is allowing the dogs too much freedom and time together at the beginning. Introductions must be taken slowly! You will need to treat each as an individual and not rely on the assumption that they will learn to accept each other. Think of it as if you have or have had multiple children. You would not put a 6 year old in charge of a toddler. You cannot and should not encourage one dog to be superior to the other.

Do not reinforce the dominance of one dog over the other. Treat them equally and be certain that you are the respected leader in charge.

The dogs should be walked separately, one dog, one handler. While going for a walk together may be OK, both dogs should not be walked by one person. Even short outings to yard for potty breaks must be individual and supervised.

Allow a minimum of 3-7 days before offering new stimuli. Let each dog build their confidence level and the new dog begins to feel secure. Keeping all things predictable helps relieve any anxiety. When dogs don't have to decide for themselves how they should act with another dog or person, when this decision is made for them by their person, they can relax in knowing that *you* have everything under control. They have no reason to feel offensive or to dominate another being. When they know what your expectations are, they also learn the limits of their own behavior. Rather than controlling the dog in all situations, we want the dog to learn to control himself, with verbal reminders from us of course.

The dogs should not be fed together, they should not have free playtime together. Physical activity is stimulating, especially with another dog. Stimulation leads to adrenalization which equals the flight or fight mechanism. A fight can very quickly break out where only moments ago the dogs were happily playing. For the dog that can control himself during play, this can be a rewarding time. For the dog that can't control himself, this can be catastrophic. It's so much better to be safe than sorry.

While it may seem that all is well and there's no need for such concern, you may be right. But, it's always better to take your time, learn to read the subtle language of the new dog while observing the interactions between the dogs.

Over time the two (or more) dogs will hopefully become best friends but this not always the case.

Bull Terriers are “people dogs” and jealousy can rear its ugly head. They are Bull Terriers and the shadow of their history lurks. Many bullies do find comfort with another dog and what a blessing this is. But please know that this doesn’t mean every Bull Terrier will react in this way. Constant supervision is crucial.

They are as individual and unique as we are and this must be the priority of concern when placing a dog into a new home. Respectful approaches in all interactions help the dog to learn to respect others, human and animal alike.

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Adoptees that have become good buddies in their new home with the resident Bull Terrier.