

## The Adjustment Period

During the initial period of adjustment, you have one major goal. Your goal is for both dogs to learn that "good things happen when we are together and getting along." When they are alone or don't get along, "the good things go away."

When your dogs are doing well together, give them lots of attention. Praise them and pet them. Give them a treat.

It is easy to forget to reward when the dogs are getting along. When they are lying on the floor and not fighting, occasionally give them a treat or attention just for being good dogs! Don't react only when they are "bad."

When your dogs start to spat, withdraw all rewards. You may use their crates for time outs. If they begin to growl, put BOTH dogs into the crates. Don't fuss and scold. Just put them into the crates. Don't make any value judgments about which dog is at fault. You are a human. You are missing many doggie signals. The culprit may be the dog who didn't growl but started the spat by giving the other dog a challenging stare. The point is, whatever you do, you do to both dogs.

If your newly adopted Great Dane is a youngster, it may be more energetic than your current dog. In order to prevent stressing the resident dog, they may need a break from each other. Give your adopted Dane a 'time out' in its crate or in a separate area away from the resident dog. This gives everyone time to relax and calm down.

Remember, good things happen when they are together and being good and not when they are arguing. Reinforce their positive behavior, and your Great Dane will fit in quickly!



**Mid-Atlantic Great Dane  
Rescue League**



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## Mid-Atlantic Great Dane Rescue League



## INTRODUCING A GREAT DANE TO YOUR CURRENT DOG

*A Guide for new  
Great Dane owners*

## INTRODUCING A GREAT DANE TO YOUR EXISTING DOG

First, it is important that your existing dog be well-trained and not have any annoying behavioral problems before you introduce another dog into your home.

Hopefully, from the time you got your existing dog, you have worked to socialize this dog with others. If not, perhaps it is best to start on that immediately, before there is another dog in your near future.



**Adopting the opposite sex dog works best.**

Sometimes a Great Dane's "personality" can be determined while he is in foster care. But sometimes even foster care does not tell us everything because it isn't just the personality of the rescue dog that determines how he will fit in to the new family, but also the personality of your existing dog.

Before you do the actual adoption, do some sharing of smells. Give the adoptee a towel with your dog's smell on it. And give your dog a towel with the rescue Dane's smell on it. Put the towel on the floor so they can get used to that smell. (Do NOT put it in their crate or in areas they consider their personal territory.) If you do this 2 or 3 days before the adoption, it helps both adjust quickly.

Also prepare a new crate or bedding area. This will be where your adoptee can be safe and quiet, but don't let your current dog claim it! Before you leave the foster home with your new dog, ask if you can take the Dane's favorite toy or its blanket. This should go in your new dog's bed to help comfort your new dog and ease the transition.

## The Introduction

It is always best if the two dogs meet for the first time on neutral territory. That way, no one has a need to defend their territory. Meet in a park for the first time, or walk around your neighborhood. You can allow the dogs to gradually get closer as they begin to relax with each other.

Have both dogs on leads. Let them sniff and play. **KEEP THE LEASH LOOSE!!** If you put tension on the leash, you will "pass that tension" on to your dog. A loose leash lets the dog know you are confident and that all is well. He will, in turn, not be worried. Once it is clear that they are getting along, it is time to take them home.

When you arrive home, let the dogs play for a while **OUTSIDE**. Let them sniff and reacquaint themselves with each other.

Your new Great Dane may want to explore the house. Let him see other rooms and sniff around, and let the resident dog go along. Go with them, but don't be obvious about it. Leave leashes on both dogs and let them drag them along in case you need to step in. Keep an eye on them, but do not interfere unless it is necessary. Do not let the dogs get into small, enclosed spaces together. It is too early for such close confinement. Let them explore, but keep them out of trouble.

**EXPECT** your new Great Dane to have an accident. This is completely normal. Have supplies ready, clean it up quickly and **DON'T** make an issue of it. Your existing dog may also do this. They are both very excited and unsure of themselves right now. It doesn't mean this will continue forever. But if you make an issue of it now, it might extend the problem. Praise them lavishly when they potty outside to reinforce desired behavior.

Most importantly, it is advisable for an adult to be with your dogs at all times during the first few days after the Great Dane's arrival. This helps your new dog get to know you as "its humans" and lets you mediate if issues arise. When you can't be there, keep them crated or separated.



Don't show off your new dog for the first month. Let him get acclimated and comfortable with your family and your other pets before you give him more challenges. That means no at-home parties and no trips to visit family or friends for the first month.

## How will they Interact?

Most Great Danes fit right in without a lot of fuss or bother. Dogs are naturally pack animals, but it is important to allow pack members to set boundaries.

How a dog fits into the pack is situational. You may notice one dog growling when the other comes too close to their food bowl, yet that same dog may back off when the other dog has a toy. That is perfectly natural.

During the first few weeks, the dogs will be getting adjusted. It may take as long as a month for them to settle in. During this period, a lot of things may happen that won't happen long-term.

It can be hard for us humans to keep our values out of this process. If one dog seems to be on the losing end of a dispute, no need to feel sorry for the loser. The relationship they establish will be accepted by both dogs, so don't try to compensate for this.

Many dog owners have success using an approach called "Nothing in Life is Free" (NiLiF.) This is a training method that helps dogs settle in their human and canine pack. "NiLiF" is not a magic pill that will solve a specific behavior problem; rather, it's a way of living with your dogs that will help them behave better because they trust and accept your leadership. Dogs become more confident and better companions when they know where they stand within the family hierarchy. NiLiF provides the structure and positive guidance that helps eliminate confusion about who is in charge.

Start by using positive reinforcement methods to teach your dogs a few commands or tricks. "Sit," "Down" and "Stay" are useful commands and "Shake," "Speak" and "Rollover" are fun tricks to teach your dog.

Once your dogs know these commands, you can begin to practice NiLiF. Before you give a dog anything it wants (a meal, a treat, a walk, a pat on the head) it must first perform one of the commands it has learned. Be consistent and have family members practice NiLiF as well.

In no time, your dogs will regard you and your family as 'the givers of wonderful things when we obey their commands!'