

Two's Company

Got two puppies from the same litter? You may be surprised to know that they need MORE individual socialisation, not less! If your puppy would rather play fight with his buddy than listen to you, you need to take action NOW!

Top three rules of owning two puppies

Go solo!

Some ten years ago, my behaviour practice reviewed our cases of dog-to-dog aggression. We looked for common factors in adult dogs which showed aggression to other dogs out on walks, and came up with some rather surprising results. These indicated that second dogs were much more likely to develop such problems than 'only' dogs in the home! Our experience is that puppies which are homed together need *more* socialisation with other dogs, not less, and they need to do this **on their own**. This means getting each puppy out and about to meet and mix with other dogs on **separate** walks and excursions as often as possible. Your pups will never learn to stand on their own four paws unless you invest in them individually now.

Action! Get your puppies out and about INDIVIDUALLY, EVERY day!

Playing by the rules

Play between dogs is a form of arousal – and as such it can easily tip over the top. It is also highly enjoyable – even addictive. The consequence of this is that it may become your new pups' main focus – to the exclusion of you. Your aim should be to build a real bond with your new pups, and not just act as a poor substitute for their brother or sister. Of course, dogs are more likely to bond with their own species rather than us if possible – we are slow-moving and dull in comparison! For us to build a good relationship with our dogs we have to battle against the natural laws of social animals, and make ourselves more important than another dog – and this means interrupting and even limiting the amount of play they have together. If play is getting out of hand, use a word such as "Finish", then separate the pups and give them some quiet time apart, with a chew or toy, to calm things down. Do this often so that you can interrupt their play whenever you need to, without a fuss.

Action! Spend time training, playing with and grooming one puppy without the other one being present. Build that individual bond with him or her now – don't leave it until it's too late.

Action! Interrupt your puppies' play frequently and train them to cope with being apart for short periods.