## Getting a second dog Double your pleasure, double your fun? Or... double trouble?

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Many folks consider adding a second dog to the family and the reasons for doing so are varied. They might think their current dog would like a buddy or, they are happy with one dog and think that they'd be *really* happy with two. Then, there is the unplanned trip to the animal shelter which involves taking home an unplanned dog. Regardless of the reasons, there are many factors to consider before you decide to add another dog to you family.

My cockapoo Allie and I had been together for five years when we added Geo to the family. I had been going to the shelter regularly to look for a second dog. I was certain that I wanted another non shedding dog that was about the same size as Allie (15 lbs) or slightly larger. I had been able to stick to my convictions for the first few visits and then one day I went and there was Geo, the twelve week old, completely neurotic border collie – golden retriever mix. At that time she already exceeded Allie's height and weight, she was a pile of shedding fur and I was totally smitten. That was eight years ago.

For almost two years I had adopter's remorse. While Allie was a piece of cake to house train, chewed the heel of one shoe once and generally adapted well to new situations, Geo was the polar opposite. She humbled me; the first two years were a nightmare. It took months to house train Geo. This was due partly to the fact that at five months she was diagnosed with congenital hip dysplasia. Surgery was called for on both hips and as a result of those procedures, house training went out the window. (Note: Adding a new dog to your family WILL increase pet expenses, sometimes astronomically!)

Geo has a bit of separation anxiety and is a high strung, nervous dog. Still, she was a love and we adored her when she was not chewing the couch, oriental rugs, dresser and numerous other items. (Note: Adding a second dog will increase the odds that something will get chewed.) While Allie had the run of the house by the time she was six months old, Geo was crated in our absence (with no exceptions!) until she was two. Only then were we able to give her limited freedom for brief absences. (Note: No two dogs are the same. Some take months to house train, others learn quickly. Some are demolition chewing machines and others are not. Some seem to always come when called and others just give you the "puppy finger".)

For her part, Allie was pretty pissed off at the whole situation. She is not fond of other dogs to begin with, and Geo was a bouncing ball of puppy energy. When we first introduced Geo and Allie at the local park Geo came scampering up to Allie in full puppy mode and Allie pinned her to the ground. (Note: Always introduce the dogs to one another on neutral ground, it improves the odds of the introduction going smoothly.) Needless to say, we had "incidents" between the two dogs. Although Allie is much smaller, she would routinely send Geo into yowling fits by lunging and snapping at her face for the smallest infraction. (Note: Not all dogs get along. Adding a second dog can create intra dog aggression problems in your home. You can lower the odds of this by getting a dog of the opposite sex, but there are no guarantees.) Luckily, Geo was the submissive sort and learned to keep her distance from Allie. They never have played, but they coexist peacefully and seem to like each other's company.

While Allie was not fond of other dogs in general, Geo loved them! We would go to the park daily and meet up with other folks to let our dogs run and play. I took Allie along because it didn't seem right to leave her home. As a result of having Geo, Allie got out a lot more and learned to tolerate other dogs (never did like any of them!). I would say that Allie's overall quality of life improved because of Geo. I took them both for more outings than I would have ever taken Allie on mainly because Geo needed them. As it turned out, Allie enjoyed them too. (Note: Having two dogs means that you have to be respectful of both dog's individual needs and that means doing more "doggie stuff".)

It has been eight years since we've had both dogs and I have had no regrets in years. We enjoy Allie and Geo in completely different ways because they are completely different dogs. Yes, having two dogs means twice as many muddy paw prints in the house, twice as much potential diarrhea and vomit and twice as much hair. It also means twice as many dogs to love and double the love back.

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