

Socializing Your Puppy

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Puppies are genetically programmed to learn about and explore their future world up until just over 4 months of age. Everything that they will see as adult dogs should be introduced to them as pups. Puppies have a “window” that closes around 4 months of age and after that window is closed, it can never be opened all the way again. Early socialization to everyday things that the dog will encounter in its lifetime is very important. If you get a puppy—this is your job. No excuses. You will pretty much eliminate future behavior problems if you do this properly.

Behaviorists and trainers do not recommend waiting until your puppy has had all its shots. You have a much greater chance of developing severe behavior problems than your puppy getting sick. Your puppy should be protected from Parvo before going out and about in strange places. Use common sense. It is perfectly fine to take your puppy to friends, family members, neighbors, etc. to socialize the puppy. It is also perfectly fine for the puppy to be around the same people's pets. It is actually fine to take your puppy into Petsmart and places similar, as owners that don't care about their pets and their health do not frequent these places. I do not advise taking them to dog parks but this is because there can be other animals in the dog parks that can cause issues as well as owners who don't have their dogs trained well. Your puppy is actually more at risk in going to the vet, than the places I have mentioned above because there are sick animals at the vet. Please use caution when going to the vet and carry the puppy when you can when it is very young.

Many behaviorists talk about 100 people in 100 days. This many seem like an astronomical number and that it is not an attainable goal. However, taking the puppy to the kid's soccer or baseball game, they will certainly encounter a lot of new people. Even a trip around the neighborhood will have pet loving owners coming out of the house to meet your new ball of fluff. These numbers actually add up pretty quickly and it is actually a very realistic goal.

It is really important that you take your cues from your puppy in what they are comfortable with. For example, some pups thrive at a puppy play group and others do not.

The following two pages are a Socialization Checklist. Hang it up. Use it. Highlight things as your puppy experiences them. Aim for as many of the following as you can expose your puppy to by 16 weeks old.

Different Types of People

•Men •Parties •People on roller blades •People of all races •Bald people •People exercising (running, jogging, etc) •Children and babies •Dancing people •Mailman / pizza delivery man •Wheelchairs •Heavy people •Thin people •Tall people •Short people •People costumes •People in big coats •People with beards •Women •Boys •Girls •Shuffling people •Slouched people •People with glasses •People on crutches •People with walking sticks •People with walkers •People walking strangely •Babies •Parties •People on roller blades •People with sunglasses •People with hats

Note: It is really important that your puppy interacts with kids of different ages. Please go out of your way to find children who will follow direction well and not hurt or scare your pup by accident. Consider having as many new people as you can find give your puppy high value treats. Dogs who like kids, tend to be good with them.

Different surfaces

•Bean bags •Tippy board •Mud •Puddles •Foot bridge •Tile floors •Wood Floors •Bubble wrap •Gravel •Wobbly bridges •Heights •Carpets •Grass •Sand

Water

•Sprinklers •Hoses •Being wet by the hose •The beach •The bathtub •Swimming pools •People swimming •Water feature •Rain •A creek •The river •A lake or pond

Note-Just because you got your puppy in the winter does not mean that you don't have to go out of your way to find things that they will see in the summer.

Places

•Airport •Skate park •Bus depot •Bus stop •Train station •Shopping malls •Loud fun places (fairs) •Football game •Supermarket •School •Coffee shop •Building site •Tennis game •Office •Place with crowds •Main roads •Your place of work •Playground •Pet store •Park •Lake / Beach •Creek / River

Note- Many large stores like Home Depot and Lowes allow puppies to come and train. Check with your local store before going. This will cover many things on your list. You need to go more than one time!

Moving and making noise

- Lawn mower •Bikes •Children playing with various toys •Shopping carts •Vaccum cleaner
- Skate boards •Scooters •Bus •Train •Tractors •Ride on lawn mowers •Cars •Hammering
- Trucks •Motorbikes •Chainsaws • Helicopters •Sirens •Hair dryer •Suit cases •Remote control cars •Ceiling fans •Mirrors •Glass sliding doors •Boats •Automatic doors •Garage doors
- Dremel

Noises

- Fireworks •Storms •Parties •Musical instruments •Gunshot •Cheering •Yelling •Singing
- School bell •Sound effects CD and/or online •Saucepans •Radio •Loud noises

Note- Fireworks -please do not take your puppy to fireworks. If you know a holiday is coming like the 4th of July, be ready to make it a positive experience with lots of yummy treats, your jolly voice and a soothing music. If your puppy lives with a noise phobic dog, consider having the pup in a different location during these holidays. You can also find noises online that you can condition your puppy to.

Situations

- Leash •Harnesses •Muzzle •Collar grabs •Opening mouth •Cutting nails •Grooming (as appropriate to the breed) •Clippers •Having ears cleaned •Having eyes cleared •Having every part of the body handled •Being picked up •Teeth cleaning •The vet

Note – Please make arrangements to stop in to your vets several times for some treats and love at times when your puppy does not have an appointment.

Weird things

- Big plastic objects •Balloons •Umbrellas •Thrown things •Shopping trolleys •Baby strollers
- Fast movement •Kids toys •Wind socks •Brooms •The wind •Flags •Balls and frisbees •Tents
- Flashlights

Travel

- Ride on Elevators •The car

Other animals

- Puppy school •Big dog •Little dog •Shaggy dog •Smooth dog •Farm animals •Cats •Rabbits
- Birds

One other note and I cannot stress this enough. Dogs are born and learn to speak dog language from their mother, their littermates and other dogs in the breeder's home. However, when they come to live with people, we then expect them to learn English as a second language. If you do not continue to expose the puppy to other dogs and animals, they will lose their ability to speak "dog language" and there will be issues with them being around other animals. So, search out other dogs in the neighborhood, pets that belong to friends and family members, take the puppy to dog class and if need be, to a "doggie day-care" so that they do not lose their ability or their desire to communicate with other animals. This is truly a case of use it or lose it and again, this cannot be stressed enough!!!