

## Socializing your Puppy

We have put a great deal of time and effort in socializing your puppy from a very early age because we believe this creates a well rounded dog that is prepared for life away from its litter. Experiences permanently shape her social and psychological development. Researchers have determined that 35% of a puppy's personality traits are inherited. 65% of the adult personality is shaped by her environment.

A well socialized puppy grows up to be a dog who learns faster, adapts to new situations with less stress, is confident, and is less likely to develop behavior problems.

Socialization should begin from the first moment you arrive at your home. All members of the family need to learn how to meet the puppy and share calm energy. The puppy should associate entering the home with calm not excitement.

The information below has been taken from multiple sources, and will help guide your family through continuing this socialization period.

-From 7 weeks to 4 months of age, your puppy goes through a socialization period that permanently shapes his future personality and how he will react to things in his environment as an adult. Gently exposing him to a wide variety of people, places, and situations now makes a huge, permanent difference.

The idea behind socialization is helping your puppy become acclimated to all types of sights, sounds, and smells in a positive manner. Proper socialization can prevent a dog from being always fearful of children, for example, or of riding in a car, and it will help him develop into a well-mannered, happy companion.

Also, having a dog who is well-adjusted and confident can even go as far as to save his life one day. According to the American Veterinary Society of Animal Behavior, improper socialization can lead to behavior problems later in life. Also, the organization's position statement on socialization reads: "Behavioral issues, not infectious diseases, are the number one cause of death for dogs under three years of age." If your dog becomes lost, the fact that he's easily able to accept new places and people can better ensure he'll be cared for until you locate him. And if something happens to you, he'll have an easier time adjusting to a new caregiver or home.

**Introduce him to new sights, sounds, and smells:** To a puppy, the whole world is new, strange, and unusual, so think of everything he encounters as an opportunity to make a new, positive association. Try to come up with as many different types of people, places, noises, and textures as you can and help your puppy be exposed to them. That means, for instance, have him walk on carpet, hardwood, tile, and linoleum floors; have him meet an old person, a young person, a person wearing sunglasses, a person carrying crutches. Think of it as a scavenger hunt. Allow puppies to propel themselves into new situations as much as possible.

**Make it positive:** Most importantly, when introducing all of these new experiences to your puppy, make sure he's getting an appropriate amount of treats and praise so that he associates what he's being exposed to and the feeling of seeing something new as a fun thing. Let them come up to the scary thing slowly, if they hide in the back of the pen, they will start coming toward the scary thing slowly and it won't scare them anymore. The less you do the better. Do not be stressed yourself—dogs can read our emotions, so if you're nervous introducing your puppy to a larger dog, for example, your puppy will be nervous, too, and

may become fearful of larger dogs in the future. Be aware that sometimes our best intentions drive us to actually block puppies from getting the benefits of the activity.

**Involve the family:** By having different people taking part in the socialization process, you're continuously taking the puppy out of his comfort zone, letting him know that he might experience something new no matter who he's with. Make it a fun game for the kids by having them write down a list of everything new the puppy experienced that day while with them, such as "someone in a baseball cap" or "a police siren."

**Take baby steps:** Try to avoid doing too much too fast. For instance, if you want your puppy to get accustomed to being handled by multiple people he doesn't know, start with a few family members and slowly integrate one stranger, then two, and so on. Starting this process by taking your puppy to a huge party or a very busy public place can be overwhelming and result in a fearful response to groups of strangers in the future. A mother dog lets the litter figure out how to follow her in any situation; she teaches the puppies to fend for themselves.

**Take it public:** Once your puppy is used to the small amounts of stimuli, move outside of his comfort zone to expand the amount of new experiences he'll have. Take him to the pet store (after he's started his vaccination series), over to a friend's house for a puppy play date, on different streets in the neighborhood, and so on. At seven to ten days after he's received his full series of puppy vaccinations, it's safe to take him to the dog park.

**\*\*Our note:** We begin the vaccination series here at 6 weeks. It is often recommended that puppies not be exposed until the third vaccine in the series has been administered. However, we have always chosen to socialize the puppies before this time is up. We feel that socialization presents many advantages and is best started as soon as the puppy is brought home.

Continue reading at:

<http://www.akc.org/content/dog-training/articles/puppy-socialization/>

-The most critical period of socialization is when puppies most easily learn to accept others as a part of their family. The environmental stimulation impacts your puppy's rate of mental development during this time.

Other situations most pups should encounter at an early age include:

-Places—car, vet, beach, park, school, shops, friends' houses, crate, public transport, grooming parlor, cafe, obedience club, stairs, hard floors, carpet, gravel, other unusual surfaces (walking over a tarpaulin or a teeter-totter)

-People—friends, neighbors, family, children, elderly people, men with deep voices, men with beards, people with colored skin, people in hats, people with wheelchairs or walkers, people who ignore dogs, people who are affectionate toward dogs

-Animals—other puppies, other dogs, individual dogs, groups of dogs, working dogs, playing dogs, cats, poultry, horses, livestock

Continue reading at <https://www.thespruce.com/puppy-development-part-1-2804676>

The greatest window of learning in a dog's life starts around 3 weeks of age and closes between 16 and 20 weeks. This period allows puppies to be exposed to a wide variety of sights, sounds, smells, and sensations without becoming fearful. Puppies who miss out on these experiences may never learn to be comfortable around unfamiliar things, paving the way for anxiety, fear, and aggression later on in life. Follow these steps to give your puppy the best start possible:

1. Handling: Young puppies should be cuddled and handled daily by as many different people as possible. Keep the contact gentle and pleasant for the pup. Hold the puppy in different positions (never harsh or punitive positions), gently finger her feet, rub her muzzle, stroke her back and sides, look in her ears...try to handle the pup's body in as many ways as possible. This is done most easily when the puppy is very young, before her eyes and ears are fully open (7-10 days from birth), but can also be accomplished in the first 1-2 months. \*\*We do this with each puppy starting at 5-7 days of age.
  2. Sound sensitivity: Acclimate your puppy to lots of different sounds, being careful not to overwhelm him with too much noise too fast. Expose him to kitchen sounds, telephones ringing, children playing, sportscasters yelling on TV, radios playing, buses moving by and so on.
  3. Food bowl exercises: Teach your puppy to enjoy having people approach her bowl while she's eating. How? Walk up to your pup during her dinner-time, drop an even-tastier treat into her bowl and walk away. Repeat (once or twice during each meal) until puppy is visibly excited about your approach. Walk up, pick up her bowl, put in a treat, give bowl back, walk away. These exercises are designed to prevent resource-guarding, which occurs when dogs feel anxious about others approaching their own valued resources.
  4. Teach your puppy to be alone: Puppies must learn to tolerate being alone (completely separate from other people and animals) each and every day so as to avoid developing separation anxiety later in life.
  5. Prevent aggression: There is no need to "show the dog who's boss" or try to "dominate" him. This includes pinning the dog down, "scruffing" him or popping his leash. Confrontational approaches like these frequently backfire and create the very aggression dogs owners seek to avoid. Focus on rewarding correct behavior and preventing undesirable behavior to teach your puppy human rules and build a trusting relationship. \*\*The Monks of New Skete recommend a scruff in their training books. We have found this approach to be successful in establishing ourselves as pack leaders and have not seen any negative effects.
  6. Socialization: Expose your pup to at least five new people every day, keeping the interactions pleasant and unthreatening. Focus especially on setting up pleasant encounters with unfamiliar men and well-behaved children. Also expose the puppy to different surfaces, textures and objects.
  7. Bite inhibition: Provide plenty of appropriate toys to redirect puppy mouths to appropriate outlets. Remember that this is how puppies explore their world...don't take it personally! When puppies bite too hard during play, making a sudden noise ("Ow!") and ending the game will help them learn to use their mouths gently. Never squeeze puppies' mouths shut, yell at them or hold them down: this will frighten them and likely make biting worse!
- Continue reading at : <https://www.animalhumanesociety.org/socializing-your-dog>

The following abridged section from *Perfect Puppy in 7 Days: How to Start Your Puppy Off Right* provides examples of what to socialize puppies to and how to socialize them starting even before the puppies have been adopted into their final home. By starting early and being consistent owners will provide the best chance that their pup will grow into a happy confident dog. Here are some recommendations.

Provide puppies with positive experiences with unfamiliar people of different sizes, genders, ethnicities. Invite guests to come interact with the puppies while providing treats and toys to ensure the puppies are having a positive experience. Interacting with only household humans is not enough.

To puppies and dogs who have never seen kids, children can look like little aliens. As

puppies mature, children can also start looking more like toys or things they should chase because they scream and run and flail their arms like injured prey.

Reward calm behavior when other animals are present: Not only do we want dogs to feel safe and unafraid around other animals, we also want them to behave calmly. Reward calm behavior.

Source:

<https://drsophiayin.com/blog/entry/puppy-socialization-stop-fear-before-it-starts/>

### **Interesting studies on Socialization:**

**Interactions with Humans:** A study conducted at Utrecht University where half of a litter of newborn puppies had no exposure to humans while the other half were exposed to a high level of human scent for just 30 seconds, after which the litter was kept in isolation from human contact for several weeks. When they were reintroduced to human company, it was found that the puppies that had received the early exposure to the researcher's scent had a distinct preference for investigating people as opposed to investigating other environmental stimuli, whereas puppies that had not had the early experience showed no preference.

**Coping with Stress:** Experiments have also shown that puppies, pre-stressed in early life, subsequently have a good capacity for coping with stress and those that do not receive the stressful experiences respond to stress less well as they mature. This has to be significant for anyone interested in dog training as it is essential to the success of training that a dog is able to cope with stress and has a positive response to complex stimuli and situations. Stress inhibits learning, and training requires of the dog the capacity to process complex stimuli.

Source: <http://www.apbc.org.uk/articles/puppysocialisation1>