

How To Socialize Your Dog Or Puppy

Socialization is a vitally important part of raising a dog. Socialization should never be missed, as a lack of socialization can cause serious problems for the dog later in life. Behavioral issues, fears, anxieties, aggression and the lack of ability to deal with stressful situations all result from poor socialization.

So what is socialization? Socialization is the act of safely exposing puppies and dogs to different, strange and potentially stressful situations in a way that always provides a positive experience. Socialization sets a puppy or dog up for success when dealing with the world and the many experiences he or she will be exposed to during their lifetime.

The key to successful socialization is exposing your puppy or dog to new and strange situations and always making it a positive experience. As the handler you should make sure you control as many of the situations as possible. You want to provide only positive experiences when possible, and should negative experiences occur you should find a way to make it positive.

Socialization is an on-going thing, but the critical time for exposure and learning is between the time you bring your dog home at 8 weeks of age to 16 weeks of age. You should expose your puppy to a wide variety of dogs, people, children, equipment, footing, and more.



You should be sure that any dogs you expose your puppy to are friendly, predictable and healthy. Any bad experiences with aggressive or very rough dogs can create aggression or fear in your puppy. The goal is to teach your puppy that dogs are positive experiences, and that there is no reason for fear or aggression on their part. Safe exposure to dogs also promotes the hope that your dog will not see other dogs as a threat, meaning you won't have to worry about bad behavior in the presence of other dogs.

When exposing your puppy to people, choose open areas where there are a few friendly faces. Make sure that nobody causes your puppy any harm, fear or panic. Let your puppy experience gentle handling by strangers, play with strangers, treats from strangers (provide your own treats!), and petting. Expose your puppy to children that are under control and able to handle or pet your puppy safely and gently. Never overwhelm your puppy or stress your puppy out, but apply age-appropriate socialization with people.

Take your puppy to a playground with equipment and take him through the tunnels, down the slides, up the slides, all from the safety of your reach. Play on the equipment to expose your puppy to different surfaces and textures, while making sure your puppy doesn't fall or have the chance to panic and hurt itself. Walk your puppy over hardwood floors, sand, carpet, fencing laid on the floor, bubble wrap, plastic bags and other unique surfaces.



Remember to keep the exposures fun and positive, while keeping your puppy safe and excited about trying new things. Make sure you control the environment as much as you can to ensure safety. All positive experiences, that's what socialization is all about! When negative situations arise, remove your puppy promptly and create a positive experience with some play and bond building.

It is important to make sure that you never praise your dog when he or she is exhibiting fear, insecurity or other bad behavior. By offering praise and attention at this time, you reinforce bad behavior and bad responses. Ignore negative responses from your puppy, and reward once the desirable response is present.

Never forget that your puppy feeds off of you, so be sure to always remain calm and positive. Calm, happy voice should accompany a gentle hand. This reassurance will set your dog up for success!

To get you started, here are some ideas on places you can take your puppy or dog for socialization. Please make sure your puppy has the appropriate vaccines first!

- Training at puppy classes that include socialization time
- Farmer's Market
- Public Park
- Downtown City
- Train Station
- Pet Stores
- Any stores that allow leashed pets
- Car Rides
- Dog Socialization Play Groups
- Houses of accepting friends and family
- Visit apartment buildings and ride the elevators
- Walk around the outside of the mall

One of the keys to raising an amazing family companion or working dog is proper socialization and the result is a solid, reliable dog who trusts you and can be taken anywhere.