



Socializing Your Puppy

Socialization is one of the most important things you can do with a puppy between the ages of 8 and 16 weeks. During this critical time period, your puppy is programmed to learn about the world. Socializing your puppy to all of the people, places, and things he will encounter during his lifetime will help him grow up to be a well-rounded, well-socialized adult dog whom you can enjoy for years to come.

What is Socialization?

Many people think about other dogs when they think of socialization, but that's actually only a small piece of the puzzle. Socialization should include anything and everything your dog may experience throughout his lifetime, including different people, places, and activities. Ensuring that your puppy's early experiences are *positive* is key! Dogs who miss out on early socialization are more likely to grow up to be fearful or anxious, so putting in the work when your puppy is young is very important.

Tips for Good Socialization

- Keep it positive. To help your puppy have positive experiences, take treats along and reward your puppy for interacting with new people and new things.
- Watch your puppy's body language to see how he feels. Things like a tucked tail, leaning away, or stretching his neck out as far as he can are signs that your puppy may be feeling uncomfortable. Move away from whatever he is nervous about and try again later.
- Let your puppy set the pace. Never force him to interact with something if he is scared. Instead, move farther away from the scary thing and praise and reward any brave behavior your puppy may exhibit. If your puppy can't recover from being scared, call a professional trainer right away to get extra help.
- Don't stop at 4 months of age. Though the first 16 weeks are the most crucial for socialization, it doesn't end there. Continue to take your puppy new places and introduce him to new people for the first 18 months of his life to keep him well-socialized.
- Be safe. While it is important to take your puppy to new places, you need to balance the risk of behavior problems resulting from under-socialization with the risk of disease. Until your puppy has received his full course of puppy vaccines, his immune system is not fully developed. To keep him safe, avoid areas frequented by a lot of dogs with unknown vaccination histories, such as pet stores and dog parks. To socialize your puppy with other dogs, find friends or relatives with well-socialized dogs who are current on vaccinations. A good puppy class is also a great place to socialize. Check out our tips for finding a professional trainer for more information on finding a good class.

Puppy Socialization Bingo!

Use this Bingo card to keep track of your puppy's socialization experiences. Each time your puppy experiences something on the card, highlight it and make a note of his reaction. Try to get a whole row or column filled, just like Bingo!

B	I	N	G	O	!
City Street	Nail Trimming	Uniformed People	Automatic Sliding Doors	Crutches or Canes	Gravel
Hair Dryer	Riding in a Car	Skateboards/ Roller Skates	Umbrellas	School-Aged Children	Remote Control Toy
Veterinarian Office	Garbage Truck	Bath	People in Hats	Slippery Floors	Balloons
Elderly People	Cats/Kittens	Boats	Motorcycles	Crawling Over/Under Something	People with Glasses
Strollers/ Wagons	Toddlers	Having Ears Checked	Adult Dogs	Bicycles	Stairs
Teenagers	People with Beards	Vacuum Cleaner	Having Teeth Checked	Pool/Lake	Wheelchairs