



In Good Paws
** Dog Training **

PUPPY SOCIALIZATION TIPS

MAKE IT YOUR #1 PRIORITY TO HELP YOUR PUPPY BECOME A CONFIDENT AND HAPPY MEMBER OF SOCIETY BY SOCIALIZING THEM.

Socializing your puppy is the most important thing you can do to raise a behaviorally healthy and happy adult dog. But what does socialization mean, and how can you do it the right way?

Proper socialization means exposing your puppy **before they are 16 weeks old** to as many new people, animals, sights, sounds, environments, etc. as can be achieved safely and positively. This means not exposing them to unduly risky situations such as dog parks or pet stores, or in a way that causes overstimulation (which presents as excessive fear, withdrawal, avoidance behavior or shutdown).



GO AT YOUR PUPPY'S OWN PACE IN SAFE SPACES.

Bring friends over to your house, walk around the block, sit a distance away from a kids' playground or school, and go to well-run puppy socialization classes that have cleaning protocols before and after class. Have a quick coffee on a dog-friendly patio and bring your puppy a fun chew to work on. Work on handling and grooming procedures in small steps to build up your puppy's enjoyment.

DON'T FORGET TO MAKE IT POSITIVE.

Treats go a long way toward helping your puppy tolerate these new experiences and eventually enjoy them! If your puppy is fearful, don't have new people interact with your puppy directly, but instead give your puppy treats while new people are around. Allow them to warm up and solicit interaction when they're ready. This builds trust and confidence.

AVOID OVERWHELMING YOUR PUPPY.

Sometimes people can go wrong with socialization by overdoing it and not listening to their puppy's needs. Don't go overboard and ignore your puppy's signals that they need a break. This means allowing the puppy to choose to go up to people, explore the surface, sniff the statue, etc. on their own terms. Don't force them; this is a sure way to increase fear.

KEEP EXPOSURE SHORT AND SWEET.

Give your puppy lots of breaks and naps each day. As important as socialization is, be careful not to overdo it. Instead of asking your puppy to remain calm at a coffee shop for several hours, start with 15 minutes and build from there. Allow them plenty of alone time for naps and decompression, or you will suffer through over-tired puppy behavior.

BUILD IMPULSE CONTROL AROUND PEOPLE AND DOGS.

Allowing 100% access to all people and dogs can create hyper-social behaviors. When they grow up, walks become embarrassing and hard to manage when your now-adult dog drags you across the street to greet a stranger. Instead, teach your puppy that simply walking by others can be just as fun as meeting them (i.e., they get yummy treats from mom or dad!).

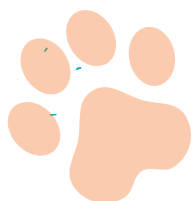
BREAK THINGS DOWN INTO SMALL STEPS.

For shy or fearful dogs, don't force them to do things they aren't comfortable with. Break down socialization into doable pieces. For sounds, play thunderstorms, garbage trucks, vacuum sounds, etc. at a very low volume that causes NO fear in your puppy. Gradually turn up the volume over time. Start by watching people at a distance and gradually get closer. Allow your puppy to play with calm, appropriate adults with plenty of escape routes and consent tests as needed.

WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT IF YOU DON'T SOCIALIZE AT A YOUNG AGE?

Under-socialized dogs can develop fearful or aggressive behaviors. Fear, reactivity, and aggression are very difficult + slow to work through once they are established. As dogs get older, it is more and more difficult to get them to accept new things. Doing remedial socialization isn't easy work, and you often cannot make the progress you could have when they were a puppy.

If you missed the critical socialization window- don't fret. Follow the advice above to start socializing your puppy or dog now. Remember: go at your dog's pace! Get training if you need help.



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