

Socializing Your Dog

...refers to providing him with POSITIVE experiences with NEW THINGS. The best way to make sure your dog has great experiences is to include things he loves (like food or toys)

new people

Let your dog approach **at his own pace**, if and when he wants to.



Associate new people with **wonderful things**.



Make sure puppies are **gently & positively exposed** to different people.



children
beards, seniors
people carrying & wearing stuff
different ethnicities
people on wheels....

other animals

Always check that the other animal is friendly & tolerant of dogs before you let your dog approach.



Teach your dog how to **act politely around other animals by rewarding him for good behavior**. Redirect him if he's pushy or overly excited.



If your adult dog **doesn't want to play with unfamiliar dogs, that's okay**. Adult people don't want to play with every other person we meet either!



new things & environments

To prevent **noise phobia** (eg, fear of thunder), feed your dog a tiny treat every time the noise happens.



Introduce young dogs to lots of **different surfaces**.



... plastic, rubber, snow, sand, etc.

Take rides in a boat, train car, or elevator.



Visit the vet & groomer's just for treats and petting.



Teach your dog to **enjoy wearing a muzzle** by making it into a "treat basket"



Avoid truly scary situations, such as fireworks.



Visit parking lots and other busy places just to watch the people, animals, vehicles, etc. and feed your dog treats.



Avoid truly scary situations, such as fireworks.



Remember: EXPOSURE alone isn't socialization!

If your dog isn't having a great time, you could do more harm than good. Dogs don't just "get over" issues by themselves, so if your dog is shy, worried, or overly excited, leave the situation and work with a professional who can help both of you. If your dog is having a blast and is happy and comfortable, you're doing a great job of socializing him!

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The Critical Period for Puppy Socialisation is from 3 to 12 weeks of age. During this period, puppies will usually respond to new things with curiosity and little fear. After this period, puppies will usually respond to new things with fear or fear based aggression. After 14 to 20 weeks (5 months) the socialisation window closes. Though you can and should socialise an adult dog it will be a lot harder.



Failure to socialise, or incorrect socialisation, during the critical period will result in a fearful dog, which will be displayed as either timidity or fear-based aggression towards new things.

It's critical to *try* introduce your puppy to all the things that he will encounter during the rest of his life so that he won't fear them later. "Encounter now what he will encounter later."

Provide opportunities for your puppy to explore many different places / animals / people / surfaces / sounds / sights / scents / tastes.

Your puppy's temperament will be about equally determined by genetics (breed and parents' characteristics) and how you socialise and interact with your puppy NOW! Traumatic experiences at any age can also impact your dog's temperament.

If your adult dog was not properly socialised as a puppy, it is not too late. You can introduce your adult dog to new things in the same way you would introduce a puppy, but introductions are likely to take much longer when done with a dog older than the critical period.

How to do introduce your PUPPY or DOG to new experiences

All introductions must be fun and positive for the puppy or else you will do more harm than good!

Let your puppy set the pace, never force. Keep your puppy on a harness and **loose lead** and always allow him to move away when he is uncomfortable. Reward with praise and treats but don't bribe or lure your puppy towards the new thing.

Avoid carrying your puppy to new experiences as he will not be able to move away. If you do carry your puppy (to reduce disease risk), be very attentive to his body language. If he shows any signs of fear or distress (stiffening up, tucked tail, ears back, growling, cowering, looking away, etc) take him out of the situation immediately.

Never overwhelm. Don't expose your puppy to noisy groups of people or dogs such as parties, crowded streets or cafes, or public events.

Socialisation Checklist

Cautions: When Socialising you puppy or dog check for these things:

by Karen Pryor <http://www.clickertraining.com/node/3953>

Does your dog has an escape route?	Good. Make sure he is able to move away from the new thing or situation.
Is your dog using the escape route repeatedly, or is he reluctant to come back to the challenge?	Bad. The challenge is probably too challenging.
Is your dog coming back of his own choice?	Good. It means you are keeping the challenge level with his curiosity.
Are you using food to lure the dog to approach the new thing?	Bad. This is very common, but it's a mistake. This demonstrates not the dog's comfort level, but the magnetism of the food. I sometimes see dogs drawn into an uncomfortable location by food, focusing on the food to avoid seeing the scary parts. When the food is gone, these dogs look up and "suddenly" have a fear reaction. I use lots of food in training, of course, but food is for rewarding, not bribing!)

Balancing the Need to Socialise vs Infection Risk

Your puppy may not be fully immunised until 2 weeks after his third puppy vaccination. Parvo virus can be deadly. *However*, failure to socialise your puppy is even more deadly! Many more dogs die from behavioural problems caused by lack of early socialisation than die from parvo. So you must still get your puppy out into the world during the critical socialisation period, but you just need to take some sensible precautions.

Before your puppy's third vaccination, don't let him touch surfaces in places where lots of dogs go such as popular dog walking paths, dog parks, vets, pet stores, etc. But you can and should take your puppy to these places but carry him or put him in a pram; don't let him walk around and sniff. Whenever you carry your puppy, be especially aware of his body language. If he shows any signs of fear or distress such as stiffening, looking away, hiding his face, tucked tail, growling, etc, move away immediately.

Take your puppy to places of lower risk such to the homes of people who have no dogs or have vaccinated and friendly dogs. Let him off lead to sniff and explore. Take him on car trips and just sit in the car, or sit on a park bench with you puppy in your arms and watch, smell and listen.

How to Use the Socialization Checklist.

- Look at the categories. Think about what your dog will encounter during his life and try to add one new thing of your own to each category.
- Delete any items your dog will never encounter as an adult (are you sure???)
- Give your puppy good experiences with at least 5 items each day, from the various categories.
- One introduction isn't enough. Your puppy should be introduced to each new thing a few times to ensure he is well accustomed to it.

Give your puppy only good experiences, not scary, bad or neutral ones. Carefully watch your puppy's reaction and never force your puppy to be uncomfortable. Give treats and praise to create a positive association.

Body Manipulation

- lift lips to inspect teeth and gums
- touch teeth and gums with fingers
- brush teeth with soft, dog toothbrush (no paste)
- brush teeth with dog toothbrush and dog toothpaste
- wipe feet and paws and feel between pads
- touch nails with dog nail trimmer
- clip toothpicks (sounds like nail trimming)
- see and hear fur clippers (optional)
- stroke ears and look inside
- brush all over body with a variety of combs and brushes
- stroke and manipulate tail from base to tip, lift tail
- wipe bottom
- hug loosely and hold for a few seconds
- have a brief, warm bath
- blow lightly with a hair dryer on cool, low setting
- hold briefly on back and stroke belly and chest
- wear a dog coat or sweater
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Places - Indoors

- automatic doors
- boarding kennel
- groomer
- lift (elevator)
- other people's homes
- pet shop

- ramps
- stairs (walk up and down)
- vet (go there, sit, give treats, leave)
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Places - Outdoors

- beach and ocean
- busy intersection
- cafe
- car ride - preferably in back seat
- dog show or dog sport (agility, etc)
- footbridge
- park
- school yard with children
- shopping centre
- sporting event (ie: child's soccer game)
- walk after dark
- brief walk in the rain
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Surfaces

- carpet
- metal surfaces
- tiles
- vinyl or linoleum
- wooden floors
- concrete
- grass
- wet grass
- grates
- gravel/pebbles
- mud

Socialisation Checklist

sand

Home Environment

alarm clock

all rooms, sheds, garage

dishwasher

door bell

knocking on door

hair dryer

kettle

lawn mower

leaf blower

loud music

loud TV

mop

musical instruments

oven timer

phones, various ring tones

rake

sheets and towels flapping on the line

shower and bathtub (no water)

swimming pool

vacuum cleaner

washing machine

whipper snipper

ceiling fan

pedestal fan

air conditioner

heater (electric, gas, or wood, etc)

Moving Things

bicycle

flag flapping

remote control toy

roller blades

runner/jogger

scooter

skate board

skipping rope

swings

trees blowing in the wind

sheets on the line blowing in the wind

shaking out a bath towel

Transport

airplane

bus

car

garbage truck

helicopter

mobility scooter

motorbike

train

truck

Types of People

babies

toddlers

noisy children

adult men

man with deep voice

adult women

different races and cultures

people over 60 or 70

Socialisation Checklist

Person With

- assistance or guide dog
- back pack
- cane
- cricket bat
- crutches
- erratic movements
- luggage
- pram
- shopping trolleys
- surf board
- umbrella
- walking frame
- wheelchair
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Person Wearing

- beard
- big boots
- costume (ie: Halloween, child's dress-up)
- hats, various
- hoodie
- hardhat, bike helmet, motorcycle helmet
- leg in cast
- overcoat or raincoat
- sunglasses
- unusual head dress
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Environment and Noises

- banging
- building construction

crowds

- fireworks (playback a recording)
- thunder (playback a recording)
- people yelling
- sirens
- busy traffic
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Animals

- cats
- friendly dog, large
- friendly dog, small
- puppy
- small pet: rabbit, rat or guinea pig
- chickens
- bird in cage
- pet reptile (tortoise, small lizard)
- cattle or sheep
- horses
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Misc

- shallow wading pool (ie: clamshell)
- wide variety of dog toys
- dog toys different noises
- dog toys different textures
- fruits, many different (no grapes)
- vegetables, many different (no onions)
- meats, many different
- feed all your dog's meals outside
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