



Dog Training & Behavior Services

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## Puppy Socialization - The Right Way!

### Proper Socialization

Socialization is not just about meeting other dogs and people. It is also about experiencing different places and novel objects. From **6-16 weeks your puppy is most open to new experiences**, so this is the ideal time to socialize. It is very important that your puppy always **sees their experience with new things as positive**. If they have a negative experience and you do not revisit the issue and fix it, they could end up being fearful for life.

If you notice any amount of hesitation from your puppy when introducing him to something new, it is important to communicate with them that the new thing is safe & fun. You may act excitedly, encourage your puppy to play, give your puppy treats to ease his mind or toss treats toward the new thing encouraging him (but never forcing) to be curious with the new thing. You may also touch the object when your puppy is a little unsure to help show them you are not afraid of it.

There may be times when you may need to create additional space between your puppy and the feared object (as much space as is necessary to make your puppy feel comfortable enough to eat treats, relax and play). Always keep it fun and pleasant, but don't coddle your puppy (pick up, say "it's ok" and feel sorry) as it may actually be unintentionally telling the puppy that there really is something to be afraid of.

If you are unable to help your puppy through a particular fear at the moment, be sure to make note of the fear and remember to come back and address the fear in a controlled situation.

### Improper Socialization

**Only occasionally will a puppy simply "outgrow" a fear.** "Outgrowing" is really just a dog adapting and learning to be ok with what they fear. For some puppies, it is easy to quickly overcome a fear, but for others, it often takes a little help from us. If you choose to just wait and see if the puppy outgrows the fear, you are leaving it up to chance, but you don't have to. It really is easy to help a puppy overcome their fears if you address them immediately and in the **PROPER WAY**.

It is not uncommon for a puppy to maintain their fears well into adulthood and it often gets much worse as they age. **One fear can also quickly spiral out of control into several fears.** What happens is something new happens in the presence of something scary (ex. construction noise happens while the puppy is fearful of a car going by) and all of a sudden the puppy is now afraid of the new thing (construction noise) in addition to the original fear. For this reason, it is very important to address the fear as it arises. The earlier you can address it, the better.

As your puppy ages, the amount of time it takes for them to overcome their fear greatly increases. For every fearful event they have, fixing their fear becomes that much harder.

It is not recommended that you simply make the puppy "learn to deal with it." This could make the fear significantly worse. **You NEVER want to force your puppy on something he is fearful of** (this is called "flooding" in dog training & psychology terms). It is important to allow him to take his time while you gently encourage him with praise, treats,



toys etc. Forcing a puppy or adult dog on something they are fearful of can easily cause them to have an even more negative experience and even lash out and bite. This is especially important when it comes to socializing dogs to children.

### Socialization Issues

If your puppy or dog develops a fear that they don't seem to be getting over with some positive associations like treats and play, contact a trainer as soon as possible! The more experiences your dog has around things that make him fearful, the more the fear will become ingrained! Don't let that happen! The problem is much easier to solve the sooner you address it!



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## Socialization Checklist

Use abbreviations to describe experience : E: Excellent, G: Good, U: Unsure, B: Bad

### PUPPIES AGE IN WEEKS

Exposure to:	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Babies, Toddlers, Children, Teens, Adults, Elderly									
People with wheelchairs, crutches, canes									
People in uniform, veterinarians, repair & delivery people									
Bicycles, Skateboarders, Rollerbladers									
People with umbrellas, helmets, masks									
People with hats, beards, glasses									
People with high and low pitch voices									
People carrying things									
People with strollers, wagons									
People of various ethnicities									
Kids at school grounds									
Crowds, clapping & cheering, people yelling, loud speakers									
Other puppies, friendly adult dogs									
Traffic, busses, trains, motorcycles									
Boats, atvs, lawnmowers									
Manhole covers, grates, shiny or slippery floors									
Walks after dark, in bad weather									
Elevators, automatic doors									
Balconies, stairs									
Vacuum cleaners, hair dryers									
Construction & machinery noises									
Wind, rain, thunder, snow									
Fireworks (at a distance only)									
Sporting events, fairs									
Veterinary hospitals									
Cars, drive-thru's, tunnels, car washes									
Air planes									

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