

PUPPY SOCIALIZATION 101



Socialization is KEY

Socialization refers to the process of introducing your puppy to other dogs, animals, people, and experiences in a way that creates a positive association. Along with food, shelter, veterinary care and love, socialization is one of the most important things you can do for your dog—and it needs to start as soon as you adopt your puppy!

Training & Socialization Tips

- Between 3 – 16 weeks*, puppies are most receptive to learning social interaction. Making the extra effort to see that your pup gets as many new interactions and experiences as possible will help prevent anxiety, fear, reactivity, and a host of other behavior problems that will make life difficult for you and your dog.
- It's important to socialize your puppy in good conditions so they have positive associations. Use tiny, high-value treats when going to the vet, park, on a walk, or when meeting new people or animals. You can also use bits of the pup's food for this purpose.
- It's important not to overwhelm them and to ensure they are socialized safely. As puppies, they may not yet be fully vaccinated against disease. Ideally, most pups should meet at least four new dogs and people outside your own household by 12 weeks.
- There is a window between 12-14 weeks when pups naturally avoid strangers, unfamiliar dogs, and experiences. Take care not to introduce your pet to potentially fearful situations during this time.
- Rather than punish growling, use treats to make the pup happy—otherwise, you are punishing the warning sign, and the pup will learn to bite instead.

Puppy Playtime

It's important that you provide stimulating play for your puppy, especially during the first week in its new home. Running, chasing, and fetching are important play behaviors in dogs and are necessary for proper physical development. Chewing and biting are common ways for puppies to investigate new things- think of how humans use their hands! Your puppy will be less likely to use family members or possessions as entertainment if you provide adequate puppy-safe toys. The best toys for your puppy? Choose lightweight, pliable, durable toys without attachments such as eyes and buttons that can be bitten off and swallowed. Any toy that is small enough to be swallowed should be avoided.

