



PUPPY ESSENTIALS

All About Socialization

Puppy Essentials class is designed to provide some of the things your puppy needs during this important time of his or her life.

- The class environment helps acclimate puppies to some new things, but class is just the beginning.
- Outside of class, it is important to spend time socializing your puppy to new sights, sounds, people, places and activities.
- The optimum socialization time frame is short. We hope you'll take advantage of this information.

What is socialization?

- Socialization is the positive introduction of a wide variety of new things. (See List on the reverse)
- It is more than just *exposure* to new things.
- The goal of socialization *is for your puppy to become comfortable and accustomed* to new things.

When is it important?

- Scientific research demonstrates that there is an important "socialization period" from **7 to 16 weeks of age**.
- This time is a "window of opportunity" for puppies to learn and accept new things.
- The window closes at around 16 weeks of age, which is why we stress its importance *now*.
- The American Veterinary Society of Animal Behavior (AVSAB) states that improper socialization can lead to behavior problems, and even death later in life.
 - You can read the AVSAB Position Statement at AVSAB.org.

Why is socialization important?

Through the introduction of new things, a puppy learns to accept not only what they're exposed to, but to be open to accepting other new things they'll meet throughout their lives.

- Socialization acts kind of like an immunization: It immunizes the puppy against "neo-phobia," or "fear of the new" when your dog meets something for the first time.
- In the absence of socialization as a puppy, the adult dog is often timid or fearful in new environments, when meeting new people, or having new experiences.

How to & how not to socialize your puppy

- Is isn't to simply get your dog around a group of people to be petted, or dogs to play with.
- Socialization is to get your dog *comfortable with* and *accustomed to* the world around him/her.
- Study the "Signals" handout in your Puppy Packet. Watch for subtle signs that indicate your puppy is a little stressed including, **SCARED, "PLEASE..." "PEACE!" and I'LL BE NO THREAT**.
 - This body language indicates your puppy is not completely comfortable in the situation.
 - **Do:** Study "How NOT to greet a dog" handout and help people greet your puppy correctly.
 - **Do:** Allow your puppy to make the choice to move forward or to avoid the stressful item.
 - **Don't:** Force your puppy into a situation where he or she is demonstrating reluctance.
 - **Don't:** Hold your puppy in your arms when greeting someone new.
 - **Do:** Allow your puppy to make the choice to approach or not.
 - **Do:** Bring treats and focus on making every new learning experience a positive one!
 - **Definitely:** Have fun with this! This is a very exciting time in your puppy's life. Enjoy it!

PUPPY ESSENTIALS: SOCIALIZATION IDEAS

Use this list for different ideas for socializing your puppy. Remember, exposure alone is not socialization. The goal is for your puppy to become **comfortable and accustomed** to the things on this list. Avoid overwhelming your puppy—don't try to do a lot at once. Review the body language handout and watch your puppy for signs of reluctance, anxiety, fear or stress. Always allow your puppy to choose to either move forward to explore/meet someone, or to increase distance from the fear-producing thing.

People

- Infants
- Toddlers
- Older kids/teens
- Adults/elderly people
- Men & women
- Men with beards/mustaches
- Tall & big people
- People wearing glasses/sunglasses
- People in hats, helmets, hoods
- Disabled – canes, crutches, wheelchairs
- Limping or injured people
- Different ethnicities
- People in uniforms: police, firefighters, mailmen, medical
- People with umbrellas

Exposure to People Doing Things

- Running/jogging
- Vacuuming
- Pushing a broom/sweeping
- Kneeling down (e.g., gardening)
- Carrying bags/boxes
- Throwing balls
- Standing on a ladder

Husbandry & Handling (Gently)

- Brushing
- Touch & look in Ears
- Touch hips and tail
- Examine paws and pads
- Touch nails
- Examine mouth & teeth
- Wear a collar/harness
- Vet exam (simulate to acclimate your puppy)
- Grooming, including a grooming table

Walk on/Experience Different Surfaces

- Grass
- Pavement
- Carpet
- Shiny floors
- Gravel
- Sand
- Wet surfaces/puddles
- Bathtub/shower

Exposure to Things that Move

- Bicycles
- Motorcycles
- Garbage trucks
- Cars/traffic
- Trucks
- Buses
- Trains
- Shopping cart
- Skateboards
- Vacuum cleaner

Exposure to Animals

- Other dogs/dogs that look different from to your pup
- Cats
- Horses
- Birds
- Pocket pets (guinea pig, hamster, etc.)
- Chickens, goats, other farm animals
- Any animal or species your dog may come in contact with

Household Items & Sounds

- Dishwasher
- Washing machine/dryer
- TV
- Radio
- Microwave
- Doorbell
- Air conditioner/fan
- Siri/Alexa
- Musical instruments

New Places and Environments

- Your car
- Veterinary office (lobby and exam room)
- Parks
- Beach
- Elevators
- Shops and stores
- City/town center
- Other homes
- Parking lots
- Hiking trails/wooded areas
- Sidewalks