



Puppy Socialization Checklist

Congratulations on your new family member! So, you have a brand new puppy and you want to make sure that he grows up to be a happy, well-rounded, social dog. There are many things we can do to help our puppies grow up to be calm and comfortable around unfamiliar surroundings – And many things that you want to avoid doing... The most significant stage of socialization is between 4-12 weeks of age. That is why it is so important to get a puppy from a good, responsible breeder that will help him or her start experiencing new things as soon as they are able to. What? You're just adopting a puppy that is a bit older? Don't worry – As long as you stick to these *gentle* rules, your puppy will have a great start to becoming a confident and happy adult. Here is your Puppy Socialization Checklist:

Unfamiliar People - Take your puppy with you to visit friends, the receptionist at the vet clinic, anyone and everyone that is willing to help out! Gently get your puppy used to people that look different – Tall people, young people, people with hats and glasses on, people that are in wheelchairs or hunched over. All types of people! Each time your puppy goes up to a stranger, calmly reward your puppy with a treat. Refrain from the stranger giving your puppy a treat – you don't want to create a pushy-puppy that expects treats from everyone they see! But, if you reward your puppy for saying HI, you will have a friendly dog that also pays attention to you when needed.

Dog Parks - Dog Parks can be a scary place for puppies. I would refrain from taking a puppy to an off-leash dog park for a number of reasons. First of all, there are many adult dogs that simply do not like puppies, and they will let them know. You don't want your puppy to become injured and afraid of other dogs. There are also adolescent dogs that may teach your puppy inappropriate play behaviors (bullies). And, if your puppy does not yet have a reliable recall, going to a wide open off-leash area isn't a good idea (he'll think it's a free-for-all, and that when he goes to the park he doesn't have to listen to you!). So, no dog park. Not for now...

Structured Puppy Playtimes and Daycares - A positive training based Puppy Class that has playtimes, or a well-run Playgroup is the way to go! This will be monitored by staff that is versed in dog body language (they can also help educate you!). They will be sure to direct your puppy in play that is appropriate and discontinue any unwanted behaviors. A well-run dog daycare is going to monitor play and never leave the dogs unattended, even for a moment. They will also give their puppies adequate break times and naps. Puppies don't yet know how to regulate themselves, and you don't want them to overdo it and either become

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overtired (a grumpy puppy doesn't play well with others!), or become too sore. Dog Face Puppy Classes are structured to include a lot of socialization time – As we progress we incorporate learning with play!

Handling - We usually pet our dogs in the same places – Head, back, belly. Be sure to touch your dog all over – massage his ears, play with his paws, etc. This will help your dog to be less stressed when he goes to the vet. Or, when you clip his toenails (which, with a puppy you should be doing on a weekly basis!). You will also know how your puppy looks and feels when he is healthy, so you will quickly know when something is wrong (ex. Teenage puppies frequently get ear infections)...

Water -Get your puppy used to water! If you have a dog that will need to go to the groomer, give him calm baths with warm water. When the weather is nice, play outside in the hose, get out the baby pool and sprinkler!

Other animal species -Our puppies will get very used to seeing people and other dogs, but probably not other animal species. Take them to a pet store and let them politely sniff the animals in the cages. Call around to see if you have any friends that have dog-friendly cats, birds, horses. The more positive experiences they can have with other species now, the more at-ease they will be when they see them again as an adult.

New surfaces - Take your puppy out in the world – Or, bring the world to your puppy! Have them walk on cardboard, carpet, slippery floors. Let them be puppies and get dirty in the mud! Wet grass, snow... All of this will be new and wonderful for them!

Scary sounds -We want to avoid having a dog that is afraid of thunder or sirens. You can create loud noises (get a sheet of bubble wrap!). Calmly make a loud noise and then *immediately* give a treat. Think of how you feel when you hear a noise – The buzzer on the oven, the morning alarm clock, the tornado siren. You are programmed to feel a certain way when you hear a certain noise. If your puppy starts having a positive association with loud noises, he won't grow to be afraid of them...

Strange objects -This is fun! Go through your home and find things that would be “weird” to a puppy - balloons, skateboards, vacuum cleaner, remote control cars, plastic bags blowing in the wind. Present them in a calm manner. Don't “force” your puppy to go investigate them, but allow your puppy to go towards them at his own pace. If he is afraid, you can calmly treat him each time he takes one step towards the scary object...

New Environments - Take your puppy to different buildings. Let him feel the new footing, the air temperature difference, the new smells. If your puppy is growing up in the country, take him to an urban neighborhood, outdoor shopping center, etc. If your puppy is growing up in the city, take him to a walking path in the country.

Follow this Puppy Socialization Checklist to ensure that your puppy grows up to be a happy, well-rounded adult! If your puppy is really afraid, call the Dog Face office and we can get together for a private lesson to help your puppy overcome his fear stage.

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