



## SOCIALIZING PUPPIES



If your puppy is under 14 weeks old, it is extremely important that they receive positive experiences around a variety of sights, sounds, and environments, as they are going through a sensitive developmental stage. A lack of socialization during this time is one of the leading causes of fearful and aggressive behavior. Because the socialization period is also the fear imprint period, a scary or traumatic experience during this time can affect your puppy for months, years or even the rest of their life.

But what do you do when you can't take your puppy out until they are fully vaccinated? Here are some Do's and Don'ts for puppy socialization.

**6201 FLORIN PERKINS ROAD  
SACRAMENTO, CA 95828**

**PHONE: (916) 383-7387  
FAX: (916) 383-7062**

**BEHAVIOR@SSPCA.ORG**

### DO

- Carry your puppy into dog-friendly stores.
- Be generous with rewards. Feed cheese, hot dogs, and other small tasty bits of food to help build positive associations in all new and potentially scary situations.
- Watch people and dogs from a distance. Overly exuberant puppies can learn that they don't always get to greet everyone and shy puppies can learn that the appearance of strangers does not mean a scary encounter.
- Carry your puppy into the vet for non-vaccination visits and to the groomer (if your dog will require grooming) for a quick treat without the shampoo.
- Expose your puppy to other dogs from your car. Sit in the parking lot of the dog park and let your puppy watch the dogs come and go. Contact is not necessary for safe socialization!
- Fill a kiddie pool with water bottles, boxes, and other strange objects and let your puppy explore all the new sounds and textures.
- Buy a kid's playset with tunnels and tents from your local toy store. Fill with toys and treats to encourage your puppy to explore.

### DON'T

- Don't force your puppy to approach, enter, or interact with anything that they aren't willingly approaching, entering or interacting with, ever. Shy puppies sometimes need multiple approaches to work up the courage to interact. Allowing the choice helps build confidence, don't force it.
- Don't place your puppy on dirt or grass in public areas or in back yards where friends/family has lived for less than two years. Some viruses, like canine parvovirus, can live in the soil that long.
- Don't take your puppy to the dog park until they are at least 5-6 months old and have already been socialized to a variety of other dogs. Dog parks are for socialized dogs, not for socialization. Being charged, swarmed, knocked over, mounted, and generally terrorized is not a positive experience. If you don't ever plan to visit a dog park, that's okay! Plenty of dogs prefer to spend time with people and dogs they know rather than interact with unknown dogs at the dog park.
- Don't let well-meaning strangers overwhelm your puppy with enthusiastic greetings, invasive handling (hugging, kissing, etc.). And if they want to practice training techniques they saw online, just say no.



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The following list is fairly exhaustive, and may feel a bit overwhelming! Focus on things which will be most relevant to your lifestyle and your dog's needs. That may mean focusing on feeling comfortable on busy city streets or handling for grooming.

Waiting until a puppy has received all their vaccinations is too little, too late!

- Don't let your puppy meet strange dogs you encounter in public unless you are prepared to embark on a significant behavior modification program. Relying on a complete stranger to be honest and objective about their dog's behavior is gambling with your puppy's safety.
- Don't let your friendly puppy get away with nuisance behavior in the name of socialization. Part of socialization is learning good manners around strangers and strange dogs. Allowing a friendly puppy to treat the world like his mosh pit when he is little is going to make life very challenging when he is 70lbs.

## COMMON SOCIALIZATION CATEGORIES

<b>PEOPLE</b>	Men, women, children, different skin tones, people with hats and/or sunglasses, people opening/using umbrellas, people on bikes & skateboards, loud and/or deep voices, wheelchairs, walkers, canes, & crutches, people jogging & running, children playing, people swimming & splashing, people dancing, tall and short people, people of different sizes, various hairstyles and colors
<b>OTHER DOGS</b>	Puppies, cropped ears, docked tails, dogs of all different sizes, fluffy dogs, black dogs, groups of dogs, dogs with similar play styles, dogs with different play styles
<b>HEALTH &amp; GROOMING</b>	Teeth brushing, nail clipping, ear cleaning, eye cleaning & examination, brushing/comb, bathing, allowing someone to look & feel around in mouth, laying on back, wearing a leash, collar, harness, jacket, or backpack
<b>HOUSEHOLD EXPENSES</b>	Vacuuming, raking, mowing the lawn, sprinklers, sweeping and mopping, carrying grocery bags, visitors (two and four legged), maintenance workers, mail person, neighbors at fence, neighboring dogs
<b>ENVIRONMENTS</b>	Rural, urban, & suburban areas, riding in the car, swimming in a pond or creek, being crated, training classroom, other people's houses, public park, vet's office, grooming salon, pet store, camping, hotel room, outdoor café
<b>OTHER ANIMALS</b>	Birds, cats, livestock, rats, rabbits and other small pets, squirrels and other "wild prey"
<b>SURFACES</b>	Puddle, creek, grass, blacktop, tunnel, sidewalk/road, drains, stairs, trampoline, crawl under chair or table legs
<b>SOUNDS</b>	Thunderstorms, fireworks, kids laughing and/or screaming, loud music, vacuum, hair dryer, motorcycle, doorbell/knocking, clapping
<b>WEATHER</b>	Rain, snow, sleet, hail, thunder & lightning, muddy yard, wind

## IT'S A LOT OF WORK, BUT YOU ONLY GET ONE CHANCE TO DO IT RIGHT

Socialization needs to begin on day one. The first 4-6 weeks in your home should be devoted to safe socialization. There's plenty of time to focus on training later. Since early socialization is a developmental stage that ends around 14 weeks, you have a limited window of time in which to work. By doing this work, you minimize the odds that your puppy will develop a problem behavior in the future.