



Adjusting to a new home can be a big change for a puppy—but by now, they’re probably settled in and feeling like part of the family.

It’s good for your puppy to have a routine, because that will help them feel comfortable and secure.

However, it’s also in their best interest to introduce them to new things—whether that means sounds and smells, or learning manners around new people and dogs.

That’s where puppy socialization comes in. Here’s how it works...

## **Puppy Socialization: Why, When, and How to Socialize Your Puppy**

Puppyhood is a time of joy, and also a time of learning.

For puppies, everything in the world is new—and many puppies are eager to explore.

Routine and familiar surroundings mean security. On the other hand, if your pup is only exposed to the same routine day after day, they may not know how to handle new situations.

Puppies who are socialized during their early life are often...

- Less likely to be fearful of new places, noises like thunderstorms, etc.
- Better behaved and calmer around other dogs and people.
- Adaptable and better suited for doggie day care, car rides, a trip to the groomers, and more.
- Socialization doesn’t just mean social interactions—it includes all exposures to new people, animals, environments, and other stimuli.

And, this process can help your pup learn manners and become more easygoing (curious, but not fearful) when faced with something new.

### **When Should Puppies Be Socialized?**

#### **Socialization at 1-3 Months of Age**

According to the American Veterinary Society of Animal Behavior, the first three months of life are ideal for socialization. That’s because puppies at that age are curious about new things but not prone to fearfulness yet.

Three months is approximately 12-13 weeks. Since most puppies are adopted at 8-12 weeks, that means a lot of their socialization will have happened before you adopted them.



Don't worry, though. Since your pup was more than likely with their mother and siblings at the time, they received some manners and social etiquette training naturally from interacting with fellow dogs. And, many breeders and shelters begin socialization for puppies at that age range.

There's an important health consideration to note, too. Puppies still have developing immune systems and don't finish all of their vaccines until about four months of age, so you need to be mindful of where you take them.

*Thankfully, a lot of socialization can be done in your own home. Puppy socialization classes are another great option.*

Because of the importance of socialization, many veterinarians recommend puppy classes, with a few caveats...

As a general rule, it's advised that puppies have at least one set of vaccines (and a deworming) one week before their first socialization class. That should be required for all other puppies in the class, too, and classes should be held in an environment that can be disinfected (i.e. an indoor environment).

*To decrease the risk of infectious diseases or parasites, you'll want to avoid dog parks and other highly trafficked areas until your vet gives you the okay that your pup is old enough and has finished their vaccine boosters.*

### **Socialization at 3 Months of Age and Beyond**

The American Veterinary Society of Animal Behavior also recommends continuing socialization beyond three months of age.

The only caveat is if you suspect your puppy may already be displaying fearful tendencies...

In that case, working under the guidance of a veterinarian can help your pup socialize to the extent that is comfortable for them. Your veterinarian may also have a local dog trainer they recommend.

*By getting started early and under the right guidance, you may help your pup develop more confidence and more enjoyment of new situations—not to mention, decrease the risk of developing conditions such as phobias or separation anxiety.*



When socializing a puppy or dog of any age, it's important to go slow. If a new stimulus makes your pup uneasy, stop and try again later with a 'toned down' version of the experience. For example, if they didn't like having a lot of people at your house, try having just one or two new people over next time.

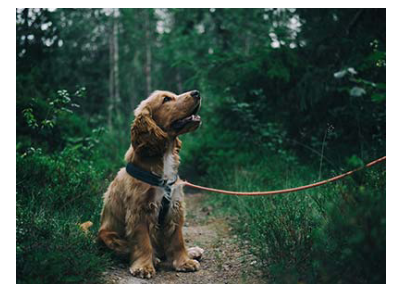
*Patience is key. And, be sure to offer praise or treats with any new experience to help your pup develop a positive association.*

Classes and training are available for dogs of all ages and may be a good option for you and your puppy.

### **Tips and Ideas for Fun Puppy Socialization**

Try these ideas for new experiences with your puppy...

- Being around people (different ages and genders) and well-socialized animals.
- Exposure to people wearing hats or sunglasses, or carrying umbrellas.
- Exploring new places and environments.
- Going for car rides.
- Using interactive toys or puzzle feeders.
- Common household noises such as doorbells and vacuum cleaners.
- Different floor/ground surfaces such as carpet, tile, concrete, grass, the bathtub, etc.
- Wearing a collar and leash.
- Low-volume audio recordings of thunderstorms or fireworks.
- Hiding treats and encouraging your pup to use their nose to find them.
- Gentle handling of their ears, mouth, and paws.



Many of these experiences can be a lot of fun when done together with your puppy. It's amazing to watch their developing minds make sense of all the new things in the world around them.

And, in the course of these fun experiences, you're giving your puppy a great chance of growing up into a calmer, more confident, well-mannered adult.

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