



Puppy Socialization

What does socialization mean? Socialization comes in many forms, and its core is how we help our puppies adapt to the world they will be living in. The crucial time for socialization is between 7 - 16 weeks of age. The critical window closes after that point, but good social practices should continue throughout adolescence and adulthood. Socialization is so much more than just exposure or having your puppy play with other puppies! We want to socialize our puppies to new sights, smells, sounds, terrain, people, dogs, cats, squirrels, weather, body handling, and coping with stress.

Socialization is the process of exposing your puppy gently and positively to new experiences, as well as learning to give and take social cues from dogs and people. To ensure your puppy *is* having a positive experience, you'll want to learn how to read body language. We recommend checking out this video from Fear Free Happy Homes: https://fearfreehappyhomes.com/content-restricted/?r=11366&wcm_redirect_to=sfwd-lessons&wcm_redirect_id=11366 (you will need a free account to watch)

If your puppy seems anxious or scared, remove your puppy from the situation and try again another time. It's important during this critical period to avoid forcing your puppy into a situation they are not able to handle. Repeatedly exposing your puppy to situations in which they are scared will increase the chance that your puppy will always be fearful in that situation or become aggressive in that situation later on.

Attending a puppy kindergarten class that focuses on all aspects of socialization is a great way to get started. These classes should encourage your puppy to gently explore new obstacles, teach about body handling, house training, how to handle puppy chewing, teach your puppy how to focus on you, and provide for safe on leash and off leash experiences. (We offer this training here at AWS!) If not local to our area, be sure to find a certified professional trainer with force free methods.

To begin socializing your puppy at home you can play the Fear Free Puppy Socialization Bingo! See the attached game for ideas about socialization.

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FEAR FREE PUPPY SOCIALIZATION



Making Exposure Positive

Use these bingo squares for ideas on how to socialize your puppy. Socialization and exposure are active processes that are most crucial from three to sixteen weeks of age but should continue well beyond this age range. However, it's important to realize that socialization is not simply about exposure—it's about making it fun and positive from the start.

Think of these experiences as a behavioral investment, like placing pennies in a piggy bank. When done properly, your investment will result in a friendly and outgoing dog. Positive, proactive socialization involves liberal use of food treats (or, for some dogs, interactive play with a toy/attention/petting) to help form positive associations.

Fun Visit at Veterinary Hospital	Have visitors to your home	Take your puppy to a friend's or relative's house	Meet at least 5 people using the 'Go-Say-Hi' protocol	See someone carrying something in hand, such as an umbrella
Play with a minimum of 3 food puzzle toys	Fun Visit at a Grooming Salon or with a Groomer	See children playing from a distance	See and/or meet a person in uniform	Hear construction sounds
Hear and/or see household appliances	See or hear a motorcycle or trolley	Go for a ride in a car	See at least 5 other animals from a distance (duck, geese, birds, squirrels, horses, cattle)	Hear and/or see lawn equipment
See or meet an adult dog who is healthy, friendly, and relaxed around puppies	Walk on 3 different safe and sturdy surfaces such as wood, gravel, sand, metal, concrete, rubber, etc	See and/or meet a person with mobility assistance (wheelchair, walker, crutches)	Hear and/or see a large truck, train, or bus from a distance	Explore at least 5 novel objects using the 'Check-It-Out' protocol
Walk, play, and/or swim in water	Be exposed to a recording of fireworks at a low and controlled volume	See and/or meet a cat who is friendly and relaxed around dogs	Hear children screaming and crying	Be exposed to the sound of wind, rain, and thunder



For more information, please visit www.fearfreehappyhomes.com

