

Socialising your puppy

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The importance of socialisation cannot be over stressed. Your puppy needs to get used to everything that life will throw at him before the window of opportunity starts to close at 12 weeks – 16 weeks old.

Failure to socialise a dog as a puppy can result in fearful or aggressive behaviour towards the unknown. Whilst this can sometimes be overcome with the correct approach and a lot of time and patience it is better to prevent it from happening in the first place by bringing up your puppy correctly and letting him grow into a happy and well adjusted adult.

The one major drawback to early socialisation is the need for vaccinations. Obviously your puppy must not be exposed to any source of infection until his vaccinations are complete. However this does not mean that he should be isolated until that time.

By the time your puppy is twelve weeks old he should have met twelve different people (outside of the family) to include men, women, children, teenagers, old people, people in uniform, tall people, short people, people with walking sticks, people wearing hats. Pay particular attention to socialising your puppy with men and children, perhaps give them some tasty extras to feed your pup as these are the people most dogs have problems with.

He needs to have met at least twelve different dogs but be careful to ensure that they are dogs that like puppies. His early experiences need to be positive.

He needs to have walked on twelve different surfaces, played with twelve different objects, been to twelve different places, exposed to twelve different noises.

Make sure that all of these encounters are safe and positive for your puppy. Do not allow people to overwhelm him, let him approach them at his own pace, never force him to approach something if he is fearful, just take your time and make sure that puppy stays within his comfort zone.

If your puppy does show fear of anything new that is introduced to him then try to remain calm and unaffected yourself and retreat from the fearful stimulus for now.

Your pup can be de-sensitised to anything that he is frightened of by associating something positive with it such as food or toys but this must be done very carefully.

Never force your puppy to 'face up to his fears'. This is called flooding and whilst it can work sometimes it is more likely to have disastrous consequences.

http://avsabonline.org/uploads/position_statements/puppy_socialization1-25-13.pdf

<http://www.petprofessionalguild.com/PuppySocializationPositionStatement><http://denisefenzi.com/2013/07/31/socialization/>