

“Socialization = Exposure to Novelty.” Socialization is the proactive process of introducing your puppy, in a constructive way, to everything he’ll encounter in life. It’s your most important job. Give your puppy as many new experiences as possible so that he’ll be comfortable in any setting as he matures. Be sure that he meets *at least 100 people by the time he’s 16 weeks old*, from babies to senior citizens. Properly socializing your puppy requires that you go out of your way to provide him with what he needs, especially during his critical early developmental stages (approx. up to 4 months): after that, it’s difficult, if not impossible, for your pup to accept something new as easily as before.

People

- An infant held by an adult
- An infant in a carseat
- A girl, between 2 & 6
- A boy, between 2 & 6
- A small group of kids between 2 & 6 (no more than 5)
- A girl, 7 or older
- A calm boy, 7 or older
- A boisterous boy, 7 or older
- A small group of kids 7 or older (no more than 5)
- A small group of kids playing with a ball
- A man with a beard
- You in a hat
- A friendly stranger in a hat
- A friendly stranger in sunglasses
- A person with a bike (who stops the bike & greets the dog)
- A person on rollerblades or a skateboard (people moving “abnormally” often worry dogs)
- A person in a wheelchair
- A person with an exaggerated gait
- A person using crutches or a cane
- A woman whose skin color is radically different from yours
- A man whose skin color is radically different from yours
- A person in uniform
- A person driving a truck
- A person carrying packages
- A woman wearing a flowing skirt or dress

Sights, Sounds, & Sensations

- A stroller
- A balloon
- An umbrella
- Cameras
- Musical instruments
- An automatic door
- A mirror
- A bus (loading/unloading passengers)
- An 18-wheeler (you can often find these parked behind grocery stores)
- A grocery cart moving past you and your dog
- Walking between two parked cars
- A vet’s office (enter, give a treat, & leave)
- An older, well-socialized dog (meeting off leash in a neutral, safe area)
- A cat with attitude

- A pet store
- Lift the dog up onto a table-like surface
- “Brush” the dog’s gums with your thumb
- Gently separate & hold each toe
- Tap each toe with a metal spoon.
- Flapping movement, e.g. a flag or shaking out a towel
- A sudden soft noise, such as a magazine dropping
- A sudden louder noise, such as dropping keys
- A sudden scary noise, such as a pan & lid dropping (use a helper so the dog doesn’t associate this with you)
- A gravel road
- Get in the bathtub (first no water, then damp, then with an inch of water)
- A lawn mower
- A sprinkler

**BE
PROACTIVE
IN SOCIALIZING YOUR
DOG SO HE DOESN’T
BECOME
REACTIVE**

Pet Connection Additions:

- People dancing
- Elevator
- People in home acting silly/making strange noises (especially if you don’t have kids to do this for you!)
- You wearing a backpack, carrying garbage cans
- Walking on cobblestones
- Entering a public toilet stall (i.e., very small space)
- Walking through a crowd
- Walking on surfaces at a marina (dock, floats, boats) where surface may have gaps.
- Walking in the woods, across streams
- Parking garage
- Revolving door
- Meet different animals, including farm animals, small animals, bunnies, etc. Far away and close-up
- Take your pup into stores that allow dogs (many do!)
- Go through the carwash
- City sidewalks
- Lots of different types of stairs
- Bouldering (when pup gets big enough, walk out to Bug Light at Willard Beach, South Portland)
- Motors of all types - hair clippers, razors, electric toothbrushes, etc. (not too loud as pups’ ears are sensitive!)
- See “Novel Ideas” for more suggestions... you are limited only by your imagination!

THE RULE OF TWELVES

Adapted with permission from Pat Schaap's "RULE OF 7's" for 7 week old puppies

Make sure all experiences are safe and positive for the puppy. Each encounter should include treats and lots of praise. Slow down and add distance if your puppy is scared!

By the time a puppy is 12 weeks old*, he should have:

1. Experienced 12 different surfaces: wood, wood-chips, carpet, tile, cement, linoleum, grass, wet grass, dirt, mud, puddles, deep pea gravel, grates, uneven surfaces, on a table, on a chair, etc.
2. Played with 12 different objects: fuzzy toys, big & small balls, hard toys, funny sounding toys, wooden items, paper or cardboard items, milk jugs, metal items, car keys, etc.
3. Experienced 12 different locations: front yard (daily), other people's homes, school yard, lake, pond, river, boat, basement, elevator, car, moving car, garage, laundry room, kennel, veterinarian hospital (stop by sometimes just to say hi & visit, lots of cookies, no vaccinations), grooming salon (just to say hi), etc.
4. Met and played with 12 new people (outside of family): include children, adults (mostly men), elderly adults, people in wheelchairs, walkers, people with canes, crutches, hats, sunglasses, etc.
5. Exposed to 12 different noises (ALWAYS keep positive and watch puppy's comfort level – we don't want the puppy scared): garage door opening, doorbell, children playing, babies screaming, big trucks, Harley motorcycles, skateboards, washing machine, shopping carts rolling, power boat, clapping, loud singing, pan dropping, horses neighing, vacuums, lawnmowers, birthday party, etc.
6. Exposed to 12 fast moving objects (don't allow to chase): skateboards, roller-skates, bicycles, motorcycles, cars, people running, cats running, scooters, vacuums, children running, children playing soccer, squirrels, cats, horses running, cows running, etc.
7. Experienced 12 different challenges: climb on, in, off and around a box, go through a cardboard tunnel, climb up and down steps, climb over obstacles, play hide & seek, go in and out a doorway with a step up or down, exposed to an electric sliding door, umbrella, balloons, walk on a wobbly table (plank of wood with a small rock underneath), jump over a broom, climb over a log, bathtub (and bath) etc.
8. Handled by owner (& family) 12 times a week: hold under arm (like a football), hold to chest, hold on floor near owner, hold in-between owner's legs, hold head, look in ears, mouth, in-between toes, hold and take temperature (ask veterinarian), hold like a baby, trim toe nails, hold in lap, etc.
9. Eaten from 12 different containers: wobbly bowl, metal, cardboard box, paper, coffee cup, china, pie plate, plastic, frying pan, Kong, Orbo, Treat-ball, Bustercube, spoon fed, paper bag, etc.
10. Eaten in 12 different locations: back yard, front yard, crate, kitchen, basement, laundry room, bathroom, friend's house, car, school yard, bathtub, up high (on work bench), under umbrella, etc.
11. Played with 12 different puppies (or safe adult dogs) as much as possible. [This does NOT mean at the dog park.]
12. Left alone safely, away from family & other animals (5-45 minutes) 12 times a week.
13. Experienced a leash and collar 12 different times in 12 different locations.

**If your puppy is over 12 weeks start right away with this socialization guide.*