



Socialization Do's and Don'ts

Do

Focus on the essentials. Take your puppy to experience a variety of places, people, dogs, and situations he's likely to encounter in his life with you.

Go at your puppy's pace. Consult your trainer about what's suitable for your particular puppy.

Socialize your puppy individually. Puppies that go everywhere with older, wiser canine housemates don't develop the ability to handle things well on their own.

Learn to read your puppy. Practice reading your puppy's body language, particularly signs of stress. It's easier than you think and will help you a great deal.

Use every opportunity. The way to create "Loves It!" reactions to as many new experiences as possible is by linking them with food or play, so always bring your Socialization Toolkit with you.

Be safe and sensible. Give your puppy the best possible learning experiences while protecting him from harm. Read and follow our Safety Guidelines.

Don't

Get careless. Stay away from places that could damage your puppy's health or behavior like the dog park or areas frequented by unfamiliar dogs until he's prepared to handle them.

Befriend every dog you meet. Don't let your puppy interact with every dog he comes across—not all dogs are friendly or healthy.

Force the issue. Never force your puppy to face something that scares him or causes him to react aggressively. Instead, remove him from the situation and slowly work on building his confidence.

Punish your puppy. Punishing your puppy for fearful or aggressive behavior will only make things worse. Work with your trainer to change your puppy's reaction positively and gently.

Transfer stress. Acting nervous when your puppy is having a fearful reaction may increase his fear. Remain calm and make him feel better by engaging him in play or offering some of his favorite treats.