



# SOCIALISATION ...

the most important thing to teach your puppy

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**S**ocialization can be described as the process by which an animal learns to recognize and interact with animal and human species with which they coexist and this in as many different situations as possible.

There exists a sensitive period during which the puppy can discover the world through positive and motivating experience. The puppy socialization window is narrow and most certainly definitive. While it is never too late to teach a dog to sit, lack of puppy socialization can lead to adults with various behavioural problems ranging from fear, insecurity and sometimes even aggression.

Based on breed and individuals, the socialization period varied from birth to around 18 weeks. As responsible breeders we want to keep the puppies with their mother and littermates for at least 10 weeks, but ideally 12 weeks. The role of the breeder and his responsibility to the future character of the puppy is crucial. During the first weeks of life, the puppy learns to interact with other puppies, to play, to respect his brothers and sisters and gain respect from his siblings. Puppies should be in contact with dogs and humans of all ages and ideally all sizes. Breeders have often noted that a singleton puppy, raised without siblings to put them in their place, tend to have issues. We have all met dogs, raised exclusively by women, who fear judges that are tall, or with hats and beards!

If you become the proud owner of a 10 or 12 week old puppy, your part in socializing your puppy must start on day 1 of his new life, because you only have a few weeks to consolidate

the work already done by its breeder and to introduce new situations. This crucial development period should be done by keeping in mind a few important points:

### Basic Rules:

This crucial development period for your puppy should be done while keeping some basic rules in mind:

- ▶ Exposure does not automatically lead to socialization because it must absolutely lead to a positive experience. A sudden exposure to a stressful situation can produce the opposite effect.
- ▶ Let your puppy explore the world at their own pace and when they are ready for a new experience. You can encourage, congratulate, reward but never force or rush them.
- ▶ Your puppy does not need to be at the heart of the action to experience a new and positive situation. If you are worried that a situation may be too much for your puppy add some distance.
- ▶ The more socialisation the better. Your puppy needs to have as many quality socialisation experiences as you can fit in before their socialisation window ends. Your dog will be better prepared to cope well as an adult.

### Basic Category Checklist to Socialise for:

- ▶ **Animals :** most important is the socialisation to other dogs. Try to socialise to the biggest variety of dogs you can find. Different ages, sizes, play styles, colours, and breeds before they reach 16 weeks of age. Same thing applies for cats, horses, chickens etc. but in a much smaller quantities. With these animals follow basic rules # 3.
- ▶ **People:** as with dogs, large and small, young, old, with glasses, a beard, a hat, a cane, walker or wheelchair, loving, fearful or indifferent, etc ...
- ▶ **Noise:** Remember that puppies have far more sensitive hearing than we do. Socialise them to a variety of noises ensuring they make positive associations

by pairing with fun things like food or play. (household noise, traffic, crowds, thunderstorm etc.)

- ▶ **Surfaces & Locations:** a lot of puppies miss out on socialising to the feel of different things under their paws, grass, carpet, wood floors, gravel, etc. Locations such as: car vet, beach, school, shops, markets and hotel room where you will stay during a dog show. This last experience can be learned at any age.
- ▶ **Handling:** Throughout their lives dogs are expected to put up with being handled by humans. It's very important that they learn to love being touched & restrained by humans for their safety and happiness, and for the safety of the humans handling them as well.

If you live in the countryside and your puppies are born at the end of the summer, you have to make an extra effort and brave the weather. There are still chances that the first thunderstorm will surprise them a little, unless you're a fan of "Doors" and their famous "Riders on the Storm." The opening thunderstorm is cool!



basic rules # 3