

Socialization

If you want your puppy to grow up to be a dog that enjoys living in our human world, you must socialize your puppy. A socialized puppy grows up to be a happier more well-adjusted dog. Socialization also mitigates future concerns, such as leash reactivity.

Encourage your puppy to try new things, but don't force them. Reward them for showing confidence. Pair a treat with a sight, sound, person, or object, and your puppy will begin to associate these new experiences with feeling good. The world will become a wonderful place to your puppy. The key is for your puppy to have positive experiences. Pay attention to your puppy's body language, if they show any signs that they are uncomfortable, slow the introduction down, increase the distance from the object, and/or decrease the intensity of the experience. If your puppy still shows sign of fear, leave the situation.

By the time, your puppy is four months old they should have wide variety of positive life experiences. Continue providing your puppy with novel positive experiences as they age. Make sure you include experiences that you expect your adult dog to enjoy. For example, if you enjoy weekend get-a-ways at the lake; make sure your puppy has positive experiences with water, boats (the sound, the movement, a ride), walking on a pier, people of all ages, splashing, and high-pitched screams of joy. If you plan to travel with your dog; your puppy needs to be socialized to the car, a wide variety of people, hotel rooms, rest areas, busy sidewalks, and outdoor dining on a patio.

If your adult dog missed out on socialization as a puppy, it doesn't mean all hope is lost. You should still introduce your dog to new things and help them become more comfortable with the world around them, in the same way you socialize a puppy. It will take some time and you may have to get assistance with counter conditioning and changing the emotional response your dog has to "fill in the blank" from a certified trainer.

Engaging in a wide variety of enrichment activities helps to socialize your puppy. Here are the areas you want to consider and some ideas for socializing your puppy:

Social:

People: men, women, children, of all ages and races, someone with a hat, with sunglasses, in a wheelchair, with a stroller, a landscaper . . .

Dogs: friendly puppies and dogs of all ages, sizes, and breeds. (Do NOT take your puppy into a dog park). It is important for your puppy to engage in supervised play with other puppies. If you do not know a friendly adult dog for them to play with, then reward your puppy when they see another dog walk by. They do not need to interact with the dog, they do need a positive association when seeing other dogs.

Being left alone: It important that your puppy learn to be alone. Gradually teach them to be alone.

Being handled: touch their ears, feet, teeth, toes, tail, and belly.

For questions, please contact Kris at 770-971-6093 or kris@bestindog.com
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Sensory:

Touch: think textures and surfaces; grass, a puddle, mud, sand, snow, rain, a soft blanket, a snuffle mat, putting a leash on and taking it off . . .

Sounds: a vacuum, a doorbell, a car honking, a baby crying, kids playing, squeaky toys, clapping, the garage door, a guitar . . .

Sight: seeing new things from up close and far away like a bird or a truck, investigating their reflection in a mirror . . .

Taste and smell: searching for their kibble in grass or a snuffle mat, licking a Kong or Lickimat . .

Many sensory enrichment activities overlap. For example, hunting for treats in snuffle mat or engaging in a sniffari, includes taste, smell, and touch.

Novel:

Movements: observing someone jumping, running, skateboarding, watching a moving car, a bike, someone waiving . . .

Objects: an umbrella, a log, a balloon, a broom, a garbage can on the street, a leash . . .

Places: the kitchen, a car ride, a friend’s house, the vet, an elevator, the pet store . . .

Challenges:

going up and down stairs, getting into the bathtub, climbing into a box, going around a chair, over a bridge, working a puzzle toy . . .

Play:

with a squeaky toy, a Kong, a snuffle mat, a stick, a ball, a milk jug, a box, a game of chase, a game of “red light green light”, games with different people, friendly dogs, and other puppies.

Start by brainstorming a list of social, sensory, novel experiences and objects, challenges, and play for your puppy to try. You can even make a bingo card, like the one I started below.

Set daily goals for what you and your puppy are going to do. Then do them.

The most important thing of all is to HAVE FUN WITH YOUR PUPPY!!!

<i>Sensory</i>	<i>Social</i>	<i>Novel</i>	<i>Challenge</i>	<i>Play</i>
Searched for treats in a snuffle mat	Left alone for 5 minutes	Saw someone waiving	Went up stairs	Played chase
Heard a baby crying	Met someone with a hat	Went on a car ride	Went through a doorway	Played with a squeaky toy
Played in a puddle	Walked past a basset hound	Watched children swinging	Went under a picnic table	Played hide and seek

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