

Socializing Your Puppy

Socializing your puppy is one of the most important parts of your puppy growing up. There is a very small window of opportunity to expose your puppy to new things and have them be excited, rather than scared. During that time it is imperative that you expose your puppy to as many different things as you can, while also making sure that all of these interactions are positive in nature. **Lack of adequate socialization is one of the major reasons animals develop behavior problems.** Puppy socialization begins with the breeder and continues with you. Expose your puppy to different **people, places, sights and sounds.** Well - run puppy classes are a good way to socialize your pup to other dogs. Socializing your puppy is the key to ensuring that you'll have a happy, confident, well adjusted dog.

Sensitive Periods for Socialization : **3-14 Weeks**

When to Socialize Your Puppy

During your puppy's first three months of life, they will experience a socialization period that will permanently shape their future personality and how they will react to the environment around them. Exposure to as many different environments, objects, people and animals, as can be done safely is the best place to start. Though we want the puppy to be exposed to many things, we also want to ensure that these are **good experiences.** Make it positive - when introducing all of these new experiences to your puppy, make sure that they are getting an appropriate amount of treats and praise, so they associate what their being exposed to as a fun experience.

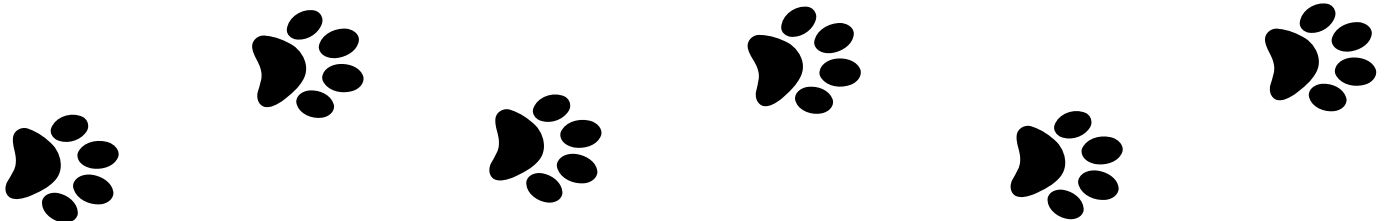
Allow them to experience safe inside and outside environments, car rides, crates, sounds, smells and gentle handling.



Why Socializing is Necessary

The idea behind socialization is that you want to help your puppy become acclimated to all types of sights, sounds, and smells in a positive manner. Proper socialization can prevent a dog from being fearful of children, for example. It will help them develop into a well-mannered, happy companion. Having a dog who's well-adjusted and confident can even go as far as to save their life one day. According to the American Veterinary Society of Animal Behavior, improper socialization can lead to behavior problems later in life. The organization's position statement on socialization reads: **"Behavioral issues, not infectious diseases, are the number one cause of death for dogs under 3 years of age."** Start taking your dog out to public places once your veterinarian says it's safe, and they'll learn how to behave in a variety of situations and to enjoy interacting with different people.

Researchers from the **Ontario Veterinary College** at the University of Guelph warn that lack of proper socialization can lead to behavioral problems down the road. Dog training is a considerable part of dog ownership, lack of proper socialization puts not only your dog at risk - but also the general public.



How to Properly Socialize your Puppy?

per the American Kennel Club

Purchasing a puppy from a reputable breeder will help immensely with getting the training process started.

Breeders will begin getting your puppy adjusted to a variety of different smells and sounds - along with gentle handling. Puppies coming from a reputable breeder are more likely to lead successful, confident lives.

Introduce your puppy to new sights, sounds and smells. To a puppy, the whole world is new, strange, and unusual, so think of everything they encounter as an opportunity to make a new, positive association. Try to come up with as many different types of people, places, noises, and textures as you can and expose your puppy to them. That means, for instance, having them walk on carpet, hardwood, tile, and linoleum floors, meet a young and old person, someone in a wheelchair or using a cane, a person with a beard, wearing sunglasses or a hood, and using an umbrella. Think of it as a scavenger hunt.

Take baby steps. Try to avoid doing too much, too fast. For instance, if you want your puppy to become accustomed to being handled by multiple people they don't know, start with a few family members. Then slowly integrate one stranger, then two, and so on. Starting this process by taking your puppy to a huge party or a very busy public place can be overwhelming and result in a fearful response to groups of strangers in the future.

Involve the Family. By having different people take part in the socialization process, you continuously move the puppy out of their comfort zone. That lets the dog know that they might experience something new, no matter who they're with. Make it a fun game for kids by having them write down a list of everything new the puppy experienced that day while with them, such as "someone in a baseball cap" or "a police siren."

Take it Public. Once your puppy can handle a small amount of stimuli, move outside of their comfort zone and expand the amount of new experiences they'll have. Take them to the pet store (after they've started their vaccination series), over to a friend's house for a canine playdate, on different streets in the neighborhood, and so on. Finding areas that are not overly crowded to walk your puppy can help them become adjusted to all of the different noises, people and other animals the world has to offer.

Go to Puppy Classes. Once your puppy has started vaccinations, they can also attend puppy classes. These classes not only help your pet begin to understand basic commands, but they also expose them to other canines and people. Skilled trainers will mediate the meetings so that all dogs and people are safe and happy during the process. You can find puppy classes through local AKC training clubs and dog training facilities.

Most importantly, when introducing all of these new experiences to your puppy, make sure they're getting an appropriate amount of treats and praise. As a result, the pet will associate these experiences with the feeling of seeing something new being a fun experience. Break treats into small pieces that will be easy for your puppy to digest. Also, try to remain calm — dogs can read our emotions. So if you're nervous when introducing your puppy to an older dog, for example, your pet will be nervous, too, and may become fearful of other dogs in the future.

Pet Proof the house! Cover crawl spaces & crevices, doorways or holes in screens. Ensure that tall items, such as shelving is secured! Make sure that all buttons, ribbons, hair bands, shoes, improper toys and medications are secured away!



12 Week Checklist - There are many important experiences that can also be accomplished at home during the puppies first 12 weeks of life. Here is a general guideline of things that a puppy should have been exposed to by the time it is 12 weeks old. If your puppy is older than 12 weeks, please start immediately!

- Different surfaces:** carpet, tile, cement, grass, wet grass, uneven surfaces, puddles, grates, etc.
- Playing with different objects:** fuzzy toys, big and small balls, funny sounding toys, cardboard, milk jugs, leather, ropes, etc. (Make sure to supervise with all new toys, especially small ones!)
- Different locations:** front yard, other peoples homes / buildings, car, moving car, garage, veterinarian, etc.
- Met and played with 12 new people, outside of the family:** children, adults, people with facial hair, wearing hats, elderly people, people in wheelchairs, walkers, canes, pushing a stroller, sunglasses, people in uniform, etc.
- Different noises :** garage door opening, doorbell, children playing, baby crying, cars / trucks, washing machine, clapping, vacuum, lawn mower, fireworks, etc. (use recordings that can be gradually increased in volume for startling sounds such as thunder & fireworks)
- Fast moving objects** (do not allow to chase) : bicycles, skateboards, cars, people running, scooters, etc.
- Handled by owner and family many times a week :** hold under arm, hold to chest, hold in between legs, hold head, look in ears, look in the mouth and be able to rub fingers along the gums, feel in between toes, trim nails (carefully), etc.
- Eaten from different shaped containers, in different locations :** metal, ceramic, Kong, treat ball, spoon fed, hand fed, etc.
- Played with different puppies or safe adult dogs as much as possible**
- Experienced a collar and walking on a leash in different locations**
- Left alone safely, in a crate or pen for up to an hour :** Once puppy is comfortable, the amount of time should be gradually increased.

Responsible Dog Ownership

Now that you have learned all of the basics for socialization, lets discuss other factors that can effect a dogs temperament. As previously mentioned, lack of socialization can lead to a multitude of behavioral problems - but sometimes genetics do play a key as well. This is why purchasing from a **reputable breeder** is the first step toward assuring your puppy's wellbeing.

There are many good reasons to buy a well-bred purebred dog from a **responsible breeder**. The first, of course, is predictability. You will know whether you are getting a breed that exemplifies what you want from a dog, rather than an albeit cute puppy who could grow up to be something other than what you expected in terms of size, temperament, appearance, or many other factors. Unpredictability also applies to "designer dogs"; they may well

combine the worst, rather than the best, qualities of the two breeds involved. The word “breeder” alone will not suffice when you’re choosing from whom to buy a puppy. “Breeder” simply means the person owns a female dog who produced a litter of puppies. If this person isn't knowledgeable about the breed, doesn't know the breed standard, and isn't working toward producing dogs who look like the standard and are physically and temperamentally sound, the results, again, could be unpredictable—or worse. Irresponsible breeders who breed for profit rather than quality will accept any buyer with a check or credit card. Ethical breeders screen new homes (as a potential new owner, be prepared for lots of questions), serve as knowledgeable mentors after you take your puppy home, and will always be ready to take back or re-home any dog they produced. In other words, they deeply care.

Because **ethical breeders** spend lots of time socializing, caring for, and observing their puppies, they will be able to recommend the puppy most likely to fit best into your life. In most cases the breeder will not let you take your puppy home before they are 12 weeks old, ensuring they are old enough to adjust well. They will tell you what you need to buy before you bring your puppy home, have started his paper training, had his health checked, and begun to accustom him to having his nails cut, feet trimmed, and coat brushed. All of this gets your puppy off to the best possible start.

It's important to understand that **responsible breeders** do not contribute to the situation of homeless pets in shelters. In fact, they support breed-rescue efforts that help those dogs and are often actively involved in transport, fostering, and placement of rescued dogs. Responsible breeders find good homes for every animal they breed, and they keep track of them once they leave. They take great care in producing healthy, well-adjusted animals who look like the breed is supposed to and have correct temperament—which for the Shih Tzu means calm, friendly, playful, and inquisitive, and responding quickly and easily to basic training. The dogs who wind up in shelters do not come from responsible breeders but rather from poorly bred, randomly raised, or “damaged” dogs who spent their early lives in one or more unsuitable homes.