

Socialization P.L.A.N. for Puppies



Socialization window: 3 weeks to 14 weeks old

This plan comprises many categories that many don't think about with regards to the many things to consider exposing puppies to if within the socialization window. The most important aspect is making sure these exposures are done in a controlled environment, as puppies of this age are still considered immunocompromised (see each category for more information). Many of these situations can be scary and intimidating for puppies, therefore it is also important to keep in mind to make these experiences as positive as possible including using positive reinforcement (treats of high value, praise, toys that they enjoy, etc.).

P = PEOPLE

- Exposing your puppy to different people is recommended. Things to consider in regards to this include:
 - Adults v. children – making sure that the interactions with children of varying ages is appropriate and not overbearing
 - Males and females
 - People wearing different clothing items that could be considered scary such as hats, hoodies with hood up, backpacks, large coats, glasses, etc.
 - People of different races or ethnicities

L = LOCATION

- Exposing your puppy to different locations/places is recommended, WITH EXCEPTIONS.
 - Bringing your puppy to different places can be helpful, however your puppy is not fully vaccinated within their socialization window, therefore making visiting certain locations difficult and/or different until fully vaccinated (see below).
 - ***Social gatherings or public places***
 - These can be great opportunities for interactions with new puppies but please be cautious of other pets with unknown vaccination statuses, and/or places that are more likely to harbor infectious diseases such as parvo virus (*see more below).
 - Places such as sidewalks, in carts/wagons/strollers, on clean blankets, or being picked up are generally safe situations.
 - ***Puppy obedience classes/training classes***
 - These are HIGHLY encouraged to pursue for all puppy breeds. Highly recommend making sure that these facilities have strict cleaning protocols and require some level of vaccinations.

- ***Veterinary clinic(s)***
 - Your puppy will already be visiting for their vaccination visits, however visiting the clinic when they are not getting vaccinations will help to form positive experiences associated with the clinic as well!
- Places to avoid that are high risk for contagion of diseases and have potential to encourage inappropriate behaviors include dog parks, doggie daycares with no structure/breaks, wooded/tall grass/swampy/muddy areas, and/or in association with wild animals or pets of unknown vaccination status.

A = ANIMALS

- Dogs are inherently social beings and like to interact with other dogs and animals, however during this socialization period, it is important to encourage positive interactions with other animals and appropriate reciprocal behavior.
 - We recommend interactions with other dogs and cats with known vaccination statuses and not showing any signs of sickness.

N = NOVELTY

- Novelty stands for any new experience that your puppy can experience/be exposed to.
- There are LOTS of things to consider exposing your puppy to in a positive way while young to make them less fearful adults. Some of these things are listed below:
 - Sights
 - Sounds (thunderstorms, fireworks, cars/trains, gun shots, barking, door bells etc.)
 - Movement (jumping, hands above head, running, etc.)
 - Textures (grass, rocks, pavement, carpet, tile, etc.)
 - Body palpitations (feet/nails, ears, mouth, body, etc.)
 - Objects (vacuums, trash bags, pillows, brooms, fans, etc.)
- For items that involve multiple senses (i.e. vacuums), start with sight, then sound, then movement.
 - For example, start with the vacuum off in the room and let them investigate it while off while giving positive reinforcement. Then turn it on without moving, then lastly move the vacuum normally.
- The key to this is going slow! Do not exceed the puppy's comfortable behavioral threshold as this could induce fear. Try to maintain a tail wag, happy face or calm behavior, otherwise go back to the previous level that was well tolerated and work your way back up again.
- Working with your puppy on allowing handling of different body parts will make future vet visits go much smoother as well

There are lots of helpful sources to refer to in regards to proper puppy socialization and this is a vital part of your puppy's development.