



## The Mannerly Dog

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### **Training Tip Sheet: Socializing Your New Adult Dog**

#### ***What does socialization mean?***

Simply, socialization is the process we use to gently introduce puppies to the new experiences they will be exposed to during their lives. When you get a new adult dog, you can't be sure what he learned as a pup, so it's best to assume that he needs help. Associating all new things with a treat each time is a good start.

#### ***Why Socialization is Important:***

We are asking an animal to live in a "people" world. Dogs aren't born understanding how or why we do things. Puppies have a window of opportunity to learn that new things are not scary, from about 7 weeks to about 4 months of age. Without learning the skills in puppyhood, it's difficult for a dog to learn to tolerate new things. Rather than waiting for your dog to show he's scared of something new, why not consider everything new as potentially scary and give him a treat each time he sees something new and looks curious? We can associate new things with something really good – a yummy treat – that he'll anticipate when he sees those things again.

#### ***Enough, But Not Too Much!***

Be careful not to overstimulate a new dog. It's just as important for him to learn to rest alone in a kennel as it is to learn to tolerate seeing new things. Your new dog may be a little stressed already as he learns about his new home, perhaps having been in a shelter. Learn to notice when he's stressed and when he's relaxed.

*Rule of Thumb:* Introduce your dog to one new person and one new environment or experience every day – not all at once, but in separate sessions.

#### ***Specific Techniques & Ideas***

- Make sure your dog always has a clear option to exit the situation. It must be his choice to participate, and at some times he may not want to. Respect him by giving him that option; you can try again another time, and it will pay off in the form of a confident dog who trusts you.
- Let your dog meet one person at a time. Give him the choice to approach; don't try to force him or allow people to reach for him if he's not comfortable.
- Pair each new experience with a yummy treat! Treats are your key to success in communicating to your dog that tolerating a new thing is a good idea. Training treats should be tiny – the size of a piece of dry dog food. Be prepared with something really tasty for potentially scary experiences like riding in the car, a visit to the vet's office, loud noises, balloons, or anything your dog has shied away from in the past.
- Don't forget to alternate new experiences with breaks. Remember, your dog has no idea why you want him to do these things; you must respect his need to process these new experiences.