



The Mannerly Dog

Nancy M. Kelly, B.S., CPDT-KA
Animal Trainer & Behavior Consultant
www.TheMannerlyDog.com
713.503.6338, mobile

Training Tip Sheet: Socializing Your New Puppy

What does socialization mean?

Simply, socialization is the process we use to gently introduce puppies to the people, noises, sights, location changes, confinements, other animals, and experiences they will be exposed to during their lives.

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. We have a unique opportunity with a new puppy to create a future that fits our lifestyle.

Enough, But Not Too Much!

We must be careful not to overstimulate puppies. It’s just as important for them to learn to rest alone in a kennel as it is to learn to tolerate going places and seeing new things.

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

Invite someone over to meet the pup, then take a break. Give him a treat as a loud truck passes on the street. Then put him in his kennel with a chewie to be followed by a nap. That’s a good day of socialization for a young pup. Be sure to play with him, continue your housetraining process, and have short training sessions also.

Specific Techniques & Ideas

You may have seen a photo of a puppy lying on his back, surrounded by 5 or 6 children, all reaching out for him; this is NOT good socialization for a puppy.

Here are some guidelines:

- Make sure your puppy 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 the puppy 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 the puppy 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 the puppy has shied away from in the past.
- Don’t forget to alternate new experiences with breaks. Remember, your puppy has no idea why you want him to do these things; you must respect his need to process these new experiences.