

# How Do I Create a Well-Socialized Dog?

## **What Does it Mean to Have a Well-Socialized Dog?**

A well-socialized dog is a dog who is friendly around people and other dogs, but also doesn't frighten easily in new environments filled with new types of noises. Dogs have strong jaws and teeth and when they are frightened by unfamiliar people or events, they often resort to using them to defend themselves, even if the situation seems unwarranted by a person. We must expose our pups to a variety of people, dogs, and situations so they are not surprised by the constantly novel situations we will be putting them in as adult dogs.

## **How Do We Create a Friendly and Unfearful Dog?**

Your puppy comes equip with a special socializing window (called a critical period) that lasts from 3 weeks to 16 weeks of age. During this time, your puppy is forming their impressions about the world, particularly their social relationships with people and other dogs.

According to Dr. Ian Dunbar, your puppy must meet 100 new people before they are 5 months old. This recommendation takes advantage of the socializing window and is a way of making sure you cover all sorts of people - puppy social situations and although we are interested in having a dog that is friendly with other dogs, friendliness with humans is your number one priority. After 4 months of age (Dunbar states 5 months), strange movements or situations with people may be met with suspicion if you have not taught him new encounters are fun.

## **How Do I Find 100 People to Meet My Dog?**

Start with a puppy class. Classes should allow time to let your puppy meet the other people and dogs in the class. Arrange your own meet and greets. Make sure you have plenty of friends to your house before your puppy is 4-5 months old. Make your guests dinner, rent them a movie and let them play with your new pup. Also, take your puppy with you to several pet stores and vet offices. Most staff are usually happy to give your puppy a treat or a pat. Finally,



capitalize on your puppy's cuteness! When people say your puppy is adorable, encourage them to stop and interact with him.

People come in all sorts of shapes and sizes so for your puppy to categorize all people as potential friends, your goal is to look for novelty. Here is a list of types of people you should make sure to look for:

- Men
- Children
- Toddlers
- Babies
- People with Hats (helmets/ umbrellas/ sunglasses)
- People with bags/ canes/ crutches
- People in wheelchairs
- People on bikes/ skateboards (dogs especially hate them for their noise)/ scooters
- People who overly stare (Dogs find this threatening. You can practice this one too!)
- Crowds

### **What About Socializing my Puppy to Dogs? What Can We Do To Make Sure Our Dog is Dog-Friendly?**

Although safety and friendliness around people is the most important thing you will teach your dog, you can also begin socializing your dog to other dogs at the same time. Again, a puppy class is your best starting point. In a well-run puppy class, the instructor will not only leave plenty of time for your pup to meet and make friends with other puppies but they will also make sure that timid dogs are not paired with rough ones. Your instructor should have a keen eye for body language and should know when your puppy is having fun and when he is stressed.

Outside of class, rough and tumble players can go to the dog park. Avoid dog parks with more than 6 dogs off leash. Above six, the owners are not in control of their dogs and it is difficult for you to make sure all of the dogs are friendly towards puppies. Also, watch that your puppy isn't playing too roughly. If he looks stressed or if he is repetitively body checking another dog, slow down the play by calling your dog to come frequently or divert attention to a toy.



Smaller dogs or dogs that don't like to wrestle can meet on the UEL trails or on the street, or at a time when there are fewer dogs at the park. Having particular 'doggy friends' like your neighbor's dog next door, a known puppy-friend at the park, or your friend's adult dog (who doesn't mind puppies) are great for your dog to continue to learn to speak 'dog'.

Wherever you socialize your pup, make sure they take breaks. By giving your pup rests from play, you are bringing the excitement level back down. This ensures that there are no altercations brought on by out-of-control puppy emotions. This should be done at least every 5 minutes during intense play.

Besides just exposing your dog to other dogs, remember that you are helping your puppy learn appropriate play and proper reading of other dog's body language. Watch your pup's playing style— does he like to wrestle? Does he like to sniff more? Is he making the other dog defensive? Are they playing too rough? Don't stand on the sidelines and "let them work it out"; puppies are learning how to interact with other dogs and need guidance on how to do it.

### **I am Socializing my Puppy to People and Other Dogs Extensively, is There Anything Else is Involved in Socializing My Puppy?**

Though meeting new dogs and new people is top priority, your puppy should also be exposed to new sights and sounds. Many owners want to be able to take their dogs to their kid's sporting events, include them in camping, and walk them down busy roads. You need to show your dog that loud noises such as a passing busses are fun. If you plan to go to the great outdoors and will be outside in the dark... it is important to sometimes walk your puppy at night so that they are not spooked by eerie shadows. A puppy class is also good for exposing your dog to new noises. Most instructors will bring along a variety of sounds but the best exposure is the class itself. It is usually filled with barking pups, talking people and scraping chairs. Puppy class is the most efficient way to socialize your pup; there are people, dogs, and noises combined with treats and playtime! What could be more challenging and fun for your dog?

