



How Puppy Parents Can Help Their Puppy Become Social(ized)

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Pet parents bring their puppy home, buy the right food, that cute bed, those pee pads, and want to be the best parent. The pet parents should not forget to also include opportunities to socialize their puppy. The best time to begin socializing your puppy is during the first 3 months of your puppy's life. This period is the best window of opportunity for your puppy to adapt to new people, other dogs and animals, noises, visuals, smells, objects, etc. Inadequate socialization during this period can increase the risk of behavior problems later in life, such as, fear and/or aggression. "In fact, behavioral problems are the number one cause of relinquishment to shelters. Behavioral issues, not infectious diseases, are the number one cause of death for dogs under three years of age." --from AVSAB Position Statement on Puppy Socialization

During the first 3 months of your puppy's life, your puppy will not have been fully vaccinated and your puppy's immune system is still developing. However, because of the contribution of your puppy's maternal immunity and first set of vaccines, the risk of infection is relatively small, so long as the pet parents expose their puppy to low-risk socialization opportunities. The benefits of early socialization outweigh the risk of infection.

Position Statements from organizations as American Veterinary Society of Animal Behavior (AVSAB) can provide you more details of what may be appropriate low-risk socialization opportunities:

https://avsab.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Puppy_Socialization_Position_Statement_Download_-_10-3-14.pdf . Early socialization should include body handling (touching your puppy's paws and

mouth); sounds that your puppy can be exposed to during his/her lifetime (vacuum, sirens, garbage truck, shouting); visual (bicycle, different size adults and children, other animals); scents (your puppy will explore his/her environment with his/her nose and mouth); different types of surfaces (tile floor, grass, sand), different places (outdoor mall, veterinarian office, car ride), time alone in a safe location (crate, play pen). The Pet Professional Guild website also has a helpful socialization check list:

<https://www.petprofessionalguild.com/Resources/Documents/Puppy%20Socialization%20Check%20List.pdf> . Puppy socialization classes are offered at many locations.

Even after this initial socialization period, pet parents should continue regularly exposing their puppy to different environments. Such practice will help your puppy develop his/her ability to cope with new stimuli with less stress and fear.