



THE IMPORTANCE OF EARLY PUPPY SOCIALISATION AND TRAINING

In order for your puppy to become a confident adult dog, they need a good learning foundation. The most important aspect of the learning process is to introduce your puppy to the environments and situations they are likely to experience throughout their life.

Socialising them with people, dogs and other animals will encourage them to be socially confident as they grow. The younger the puppy, the easier it is to socialise them; the older they are, the more cautious they will be.

By the time your puppy reaches 12 weeks, anything not yet encountered is likely to be approached with caution. Therefore it is vital that between 3 and 12 weeks of age a puppy meets a wide variety of people, situations and other animals. How much socialisation is done at this early age will often determine how confident your puppy is around people, other dogs and new environments in later life.

Puppies usually go to new homes between 6 and 8 weeks of age. This is a perfect time to introduce your new puppy to the world as they will be very receptive to new experiences. Begin slowly at first, gradually increasing the number of positive encounters as your pup becomes older and gains confidence.



Meeting adults and children should be the most important as it is really important for your dog to be comfortable in peoples' company. Take your puppy to friends' houses and invite people to your house. Once your puppy has grown in confidence, take them everywhere with you if possible. Remember to carry them if in public places to protect them from infectious diseases until fully vaccinated.

Look out for signs that your puppy isn't getting anxious. An anxious puppy will try to look smaller, avoid eye contact, lick their lips or yawn. If you notice any of these signs, take your puppy away from what is making them anxious.

Your puppy should be carefully introduced to a variety of adult dogs as well as other puppies. Ensure these dogs are safe around other dogs, as a bad encounter can be worse than no encounter. Puppy parties and puppy training is a great controlled environment to do this, but remember to check the other dogs are also vaccinated and up to date. As well as meeting people and animals, remember to make sure your puppy experiences different environments and situations, such as busy traffic, roadworks, travelling in a car, towns and the countryside, and try to make sure your puppy is enjoying the experiences.

Your puppy's brain is like a sponge and every experience is stored away in their memory, building their personality. A puppy may be born with a certain temperament but it is how they are raised that will truly determine their personality. The more positive and enriching experiences they have, the more confident they will be as an adult. Punitive handling and harsh correction will damage your pup as they grow, so stick with positive learning.

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Puppies need to be gently guided into making good decisions, allowed to explore their surroundings and given reinforcement for good behaviour and redirected from behaviours you don't want.

All puppies need boundaries, but these must be given in a positive way so as not to create fear. A puppy that experiences fear or rough handling as they grow is more likely to be reactive and show aggressive behaviour as an adolescent and into adulthood.

The investment you make giving your puppy a good learning foundation will pay off throughout their life. Raising a pup can be challenging, but seeing a pup develop into a confident adult is worth the hard work.

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