



# Puppy Socialization

## Little Puppy in the Big World

Socialization is one of the single most important jobs of a Puppy Parent. Puppies have a critical socialization period that runs roughly from age three weeks to three months. During this sensitive time a puppy is developing their early view of the world around them and making associations that will carry on into adulthood.

Young puppies are primed to be open to new people, dogs, animals, environments and other experiences. As puppies grow older this acceptance of new things will fade. Fear becomes the default response to new stimuli that the dog was not exposed to as a puppy. The more you can expose your puppy early on the less fearful he will be as an adult.

It is also important to keep in mind that not all socialization is good. Although puppies are typically more accepting of new things, it is possible for them to feel scared and overwhelmed in certain situations. Those negative events can later lead to fear and phobias that can be much more difficult to deal with when they become adults.

As a Puppy Parent, your job is to expose your puppy to as many new things and ensure that the socialization process is a positive and fun experience. The time and effort you dedicate to early socialization will pay off big!

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Knowing how to read and react to puppy body language will enable you to be smart about socializing your puppy.



This puppy is shifting his weight and his ears are back. He is scared and uncomfortable.



Some puppies will show their belly of lift their paw to show they are uncomfortable.



This puppy chooses to watch from a safe place. He is not ready to explore the environment.



Some puppies need time to cautiously investigate. Use treats to encourage and build confidence.



## Charted Journey

Socializing your puppy is a big task and equally important. Your puppy is always learning, so start socialization and training as soon as the puppy comes home. Remember, the goal is that the puppy has positive experiences, not neutral or bad ones. You can pay attention to your puppy's body language to give you clues about his comfort level. Use treats generously to help form positive associations. If your puppy is scared or uncomfortable, immediately create space between your puppy and the scary thing. Once he is relaxed you can encourage him to approach by using treats. Never force a puppy to interact with something that may be scary to him.

Use our socialization chart to keep track of your puppy's progress. You can grade your puppy's response to each exposure or just check them off as you go.

Progress	Score	Puppy's Response to New Stimuli
Needs Work	1	<b>Over arousal:</b> Growl, nip, bark, struggle, lunge
	2	<b>Avoid:</b> Struggle, hide, try to get away, hesitant or won't approach
	3	<b>Freeze:</b> Holds still (and not eating treats), non-exploratory, moving slowly or acting sleepy when he shouldn't be tired
Going Well	4	<b>Calm, relaxed:</b> Playful, explores, focused on food
	5	<b>Calm, relaxed:</b> Playful, <i>even without food</i>

Handling	Score each instance																			
Massage Ears																				
Examine mouth & gums																				
Open eyelids																				
Lightly squeeze skin																				
Touch nose																				
Touch between toes																				
Handle & trim toenails																				
Cradle like a baby																				
Tug tail lightly																				
Gently grab other body parts																				
Lightly grab collar																				
Hold head																				
Give belly rub																				
Wipe body with towel																				
Put on harness																				
Put on head halter																				

## Tony La Russa's Animal Rescue Foundation

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<i>People</i>	Score each instance																			
Women																				
People of other ethnicities																				
Tall men																				
Men with deep voices																				
Elderly people																				
People running																				
Infants (crawling)																				
Toddlers (walking, squealing)																				
Children (standing, playing)																				
Teenagers																				

<i>People Wearing</i>	Score each instance																			
Hats or helmets																				
Hoodies or heavy coats																				
Backpacks																				
Sunglasses																				
Canes, walkers, crutches																				
Costumes																				

<i>Sounds</i>	Score each instance																			
Doorbell ringing																				
Phone ringing																				
Babies crying																				
Garage door opening																				
Jackhammer / construction																				
Shopping cart																				
Vacuum cleaner																				
Beeping (microwave, alarm)																				
Washing machine / dryer																				
Clapping																				
Sirens																				
Fire alarms																				

<i>Stuff on Wheels</i>	Score each instance																			
Skateboards																				
Rollerblades																				
Rolling garbage bins																				

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<i>Experiences</i>	Score each instance																			
Fun crate training																				
Up & down stairs																				
In & out of doorways																				
Getting a bath																				
Playing hide & seek																				
Going through a tunnel																				
Climbing over an obstacle																				
Walking on a wobbly surface																				

<i>Unfamiliar Dogs</i>	Score each instance																			
Dogs who play well																				
Small dogs																				
Big dogs																				
A dog who corrects with force																				
Other puppies																				

<i>Other animals</i>	Score each instance																			
Cats																				
Horses																				
Birds / ducks																				
Small animals																				
Livestock																				

<i>Surfaces</i>	Score each instance																			
Concrete																				
Slippery floors																				
Metal surfaces																				
Wobbly surfaces																				
Stairs																				
Wet grass & mud																				

<i>Wait for completed shots</i>	Score each instance																			
Pet stores																				
Dog-friendly events																				
Dog-friendly hikes / trails																				
Dog parks																				
Doggy daycare																				

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Use yummy treats and praise when your puppy is introduced to new things and environments. If your puppy is scared or shy, move further away from the scary stimuli and give lots of yummy treats. Let your puppy choose the pace; never force your puppy to interact with something that may be scary for him.

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