



All Dawgs Training Services

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Great Places to Socialize Your Puppy

By Erin Healy

Since there are many different types of environments or situations that exist outside the home, socialization can be one of the most important things to include into your training schedule to create a well-rounded dog. The key to properly socializing your dog is to focus less on marketing of “pet-friendly” or “safe places”, and rather focus more on providing our dog a positive experience in conditions where they learn appropriate dog behavior. The following is a list of trainers’ favorite places to socialize a puppy:

Local, State, or Federal Parks: Taking daily or weekly walks here provides your puppy stimulation from the outdoors. Raining or snowing? Gear up and get in touch with your inner child. Show your dog how much fun it can be to run through puddles or fall into a snow pile. You have more protection from car traffic here, so it is easier to have fun.

Home Repair Stores or Nurseries: They have shiny floors, new smells, noisy equipment, and plenty of people walking around. Most of these places welcome well-behaved and vaccinated dogs. This is a great place to expose a puppy to new things without interacting much with other dogs.

Restaurants with outdoor seating: Have a snack and people watch with your dog. Some outdoor benches are sturdy enough to tie your dog to and out of the way of foot traffic. The umbrellas and table can provide new experiences and a place for your dog to rest under.

Dog Training Classes: Teach your dog to listen to you while in a group with other dogs, people and around distractions. Taught by experienced dog trainers, the classes are run with time for questions and problem solving about dog behavior. Is your dog displaying behaviors that concern you? This is a good time to seek out assistance from your class instructor.

Little League Games: There are people yelling and cheering, kids running around and plenty of open space so you and your dog can immerse at your comfort level. Educated children about dogs, how to approach a dog, and that they should never run up but always ask before petting. This type of socialization should always be done with the comfort and safety of both pet and children alike. It is also important to do this in short sessions with a positive and patient attitude.

At Home: Have people stop by to drop something off without interacting with the puppy. The first few months, have your puppy sit in their crate and watch people stop by. Give the puppy treats continuously through the crate bars while the person is there and while the puppy is calm and quiet. Teach your puppy that just because people come over does not mean that they are there for the dog. Is your dog only around you all the time? Have someone who is trustworthy take care of your pet for a few hours, making sure you always return in an appropriate amount of time. Is the dog always around just women or men? Have someone of the opposite sex play with your dog.

Tips When Socializing Your Puppy

- **Know Your Dog's Limits:** Every dog has a threshold for learning and when pushed past their limit, it can end up with a bad experience. Familiarize the signs of stress in your dog and how much space they need between them and other people/dogs. For more information on canine stress signals, see *Learning Canine Stress Signals* Webinar CD available in the All Dawgs online store.
- **Preparedness for a Positive Visit:** Pack paper towels, doggie wipes, and poop bags to avoid the embarrassment of an accident in public with no cleanup tools. Remember treats or toys to reward your dog for the behaviors you want them to continue.
- **Don't be afraid to be rude:** Do not let someone interact with your puppy that cannot listen to instructions. Dogs do not like to be teased and if they have a bad experience for someone else's pleasure, you could end up with an aggressive dog.
- **Avoid Dog Parks:** This is the worst place to socialize your dog for several reasons. Most owners do not supervise play, nor recognize the signs of bullying in time to break up or prevent a dog fight. Their dogs end up learning inappropriate behavior and tend to be dogs that play really hard, because they are allowed; many other dogs do not welcome this behavior. Many dog parks do not require the dogs be parasite or disease free or up-to-date on vaccinations to enter. Everything is done off leash, so there is no way to reinforce your puppy to come when called or be within reach if something happens.
- **If the Puppy Doesn't Have All Vaccines:** Carry your puppy around when in a store until they are too big. For larger puppies, bring a blanket to put in the bottom of a shopping cart and loop the leash through the spacing of the cart to keep them inside. It would be dangerous to let the puppy walk around on surfaces where there may be deadly disease, but it is also dangerous to keep a puppy homebound until their vaccines are complete.
- **Judge Your Lifestyle:** If you live in the country, you will want to expose your dog to things in an urban environment and vice versa. If you have a quiet household, help desensitize your pet to noises.