



All Dawgs

*ALL Dogs' Favorite Spot
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Socializing Your Puppy During Covid-19

These are strange times we are living in during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the prescribed safety precautions could disadvantage your puppy's socialization. Even during these times, it is critical to do everything possible to prevent problem behaviors from arising later in life due to under socialization during the critical time of 8 – 20 weeks of puppyhood.

What is Socialization – the process of helping your puppy become comfortable with the sights, sounds and other experiences of life with human beings – it is your **most** important job. It is about building trust:

- Trust in people – especially those who care for them
- Trust in their environment
- Trust in our expectations in them
- Trust in themselves

During this age of ‘social distancing’ the foundation of socialization still applies:

- Start young
- Let your puppy's curiosity drive them to explore a wide variety of positive circumstances
- Avoid putting your puppy in any fearful or frustrated situation

Let's look at a few ways to socialize your puppy without contributing to the spread of this virus:

Social Distancing

While there is no evidence that dogs can be infected with COVID-19, it is possible for a dog to carry the virus on their coat and transmit it to another person. To be safe, you should keep a distance of approximately 10 feet away from other people.

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Look-At-That – Take your puppy to public places and practice ‘social distancing’ to benefit your puppy. With plenty of treats in hand, every time your puppy glances towards a person or dog, give lots of praise and reward with your treats.

A Variety of People – When You Have No People

A puppy does not have to have physical contact with people in order for socialization to take place. They just need to be exposed to different people.

Now is the time to play dress up, change your mannerisms and be at different locations throughout your property. Wear unusual clothing and accessories, think Halloween costumes, use crutches, canes or other medical equipment. Go outside and knock on the door, wear different outfits throughout the house. Now is the time to be inventive!

Sights, Sounds and Sensations

Exposing your puppy to different sights, sounds and sensations is critical for puppies. Be sure that they are not actually frightening for your puppy, take it slow and encourage with forward progress.

Sights – expose your puppy to a variety of items:

- such as a stroller
- a balloon
- an umbrella
- cameras
- musical instruments
- automatic doors
- a mirror
- a bus (loading/unloading)
- an 18-wheeler
- a grocery carts
- walking between two parked cars
- a cat with attitude
- farm animals - chickens, ducks, cows and horses

Sounds – The best place to start is recorded sounds either from a CD or from an app “Sound Proof Puppy Training”. This gives you access to a variety of noises at your fingertips.

Recorded noises cannot always take the place of ‘real life’ sounds due to the level and quality of the noise, so find sources of different sounds in your house. This could be a kid’s toy that makes a funny sound, or even knocking items over (at a distance so not to startle your puppy). Items such as:

- flapping movement (a flag or shaking out a towel)
- dropping keys
- dropping magazines
- dropping a pan & lid
- a lawn mower
- a sprinkler

Always, make the noise first, then praise and reward with treats.

Sensations – expose your puppy to variety of sensations:

- lift the puppy onto a table-like surface
- brush the dog’s gums with your thumb
- gently separate and hold each toe
- gently tap each toe with a mental spoon
- gently brush your puppy
- get in a bathtub (first no water, then damp, then with an inch of water)
- different roads – gravel, dirt, blacktop and cement

Confidence Games

Set up small obstacles in your home and yard, and encourage your puppy to interact with them. Provide all sorts of tasty treats either where your puppy is comfortable, or right on the obstacles if they already feeling brave.

Use items around your home for inspiration. Mop buckets, garbage cans on their sides, plywood sheets propped up on bricks, chairs in a line with a blanket draped over them (like a tunnel), stepping over hula hoops and broom handles in a pile on the ground. Use your imagination.

Handling and Vet Preparation

Your puppy does not come ready to accept handling and if not done at an early age many puppies grow into problems with being groomed or accepting of other procedures. Be sure that all of your touch is done in a positive experience. Always have a supply of treats and be sure to touch first, praise and reward second.

The puppy is thinking “touching makes good things happen”. Have your family members participate in this and you could also dress up as describes above.

If your puppy is going to the vet – bring treats. Ask the staff taking your puppy to praise/reward them when they are NOT being afraid. Bathe them immediately after going to the vet’s office. Use warm water and shampoo to remove the virus that may be carried on their coat.

Keep in mind that variety is still key to socialization and cannot emphasize the importance of taking your puppy off your property.

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