

Check List for Puppy Socialization by Elizabeth Wells, PhD

Puppies need early socialization to become confident, well behaved adult dogs that are a pleasure to live with. Socialization is an ongoing process and has many facets. One way to be sure your puppy is well socialized is to keep a log of what your puppy has been exposed to. In many cases you need to seek out new people and experiences to facilitate this. The list below includes some suggestions. Not all puppies will need to be exposed to everything on the list, but the more you can check off your list, the more likely your pup will be well socialized.

Check list for puppy owners:

- ✓ New people...at least one per day. People should be from all age brackets and ethnic backgrounds. A trip to the parking lot of a large store can help with this.
- ✓ Children, this is a separate category from "new people" because dogs react differently to children than they do adults
- ✓ Dogs and puppies of all sizes, shapes, colors and coats.
- ✓ Automatic doors
- ✓ Elevators
- ✓ Slippery floors or any floor or surface that feels different to the paws
- ✓ Car rides in a variety of cars and in different positions in the car
- ✓ Veterinary offices – Be sure not all trips to the vet office include shots or other unpleasant experiences. Consider taking your puppy to the vet office to be weighed and to get treats
- ✓ Grooming stand, blow dryer, water hose
- ✓ Nail clippers, scissors, brushes, and clippers if your puppy requires professional grooming
- ✓ Farm animals if you live in the country
- ✓ Sprinkler systems
- ✓ Bicycles, motorcycles and other two wheeled vehicles
- ✓ ATVs, golf carts or similar vehicles
- ✓ Crates, both airline (plastic) variety and metal
- ✓ Hotel rooms
- ✓ Stairways, and be sure to include open stairs with no risers such as at hotels or in some apartment complexes
- ✓ Shopping carts
- ✓ Loud noises, such as thunder, guns or fireworks
- ✓ Vacuum cleaners, chainsaws and other loud machinery
- ✓ Airplanes, boats, trains and buses
- ✓ Balloons, toys and other unusual objects that make sound, move or might surprise such as umbrellas, popcorn machines, animated holiday decorations
- ✓ Last but not least, puppy classes and obedience classes

Places to take your puppy include: dog parks, pet supply stores, home improvement store or grocery store parking lots, vet offices, friends houses, any outdoor street, festival or event where dogs are welcome, campgrounds, playgrounds, airports, hotels, dog shows, and your neighborhood. Ask people you meet to give your pup a treat and some petting. If the puppy is anxious, have the stranger offer the treat without making eye contact with the pup. If the pup won't take a treat from a stranger, give it yourself and consider bringing tastier treats along the next time. With time your pup should be comfortable enough to accept treats from friendly strangers.