

SUCCESSFUL SOCIALIZATION

HOW TO DO IT RIGHT!

WHAT IS IT?

Socialization is the process of exposing your puppy to new things, with the goal of helping them **create positive associations**, and building long-term confidence!

WHY?

Proper socialization will help to **prevent behavior issues** commonly stemming from fear. Dogs who feel comfortable in the world tend to make better decisions.

WHEN?

Right now! The critical window for socialization is loosely **between 3-16 weeks old**. This is when new experiences are most influential in a puppy's life.

HOW?

Read on! The rest of this guide will provide instructions and ideas on how to go about successful socialization with your puppy.

SUPPLIES YOU'LL NEED:

- Your happy, well rested puppy
- A variety of delicious treats
- Fun, engaging toys
- Filled enrichment toys or chews
- A waterproof blanket, bed, or place for your puppy
- A well-fitted harness and leash
- Patience, time, and willingness to change plans

1 - IDENTIFY YOUR GOALS

Think about your puppy three years from now - an adult dog. What are they doing? Where are they going with you? Are they a family dog, a hiking buddy, an agility star, a paddle board pal?

These goals will help you understand what will be important to prioritize exposing your puppy to during the critical socialization period.

2 - MAKE A PLAN

Use your goals to guide what you introduce your puppy to, and begin planning how and when you will introduce your puppy to them. Here are some ideas - and you can (and should) strive for more than you think you need.

All dogs: Care tasks and handling, friendly dogs and puppies, new people of all kinds, smells, sights, sounds, and textures.

A family dog: Children, household sounds like blenders and vacuums, new people entering the home, neighbors, neighborhood events such as landscaping, cars, or cats.

A hiking buddy: New outdoor environments like forests, wildlife, hiking gear like harnesses and leashes, transportation, outdoor sounds like water or thunder, weather changes like rain.

An agility star: Dog sport settings, unstable surfaces, other dog sounds, confinement, new environments, novel people, crowds

3 - MAKE IT POSITIVE & FUN

Socializing should never be scary, forced, or overwhelming for your puppy or for you! Find ways to pair new situations with good feelings. Bring treats, toys, and a safe and familiar place your puppy can watch from.

Follow this general pattern: **New thing = Good thing**

Use your marker signal "Yes" or a clicker anytime your puppy notices or chooses to engage with the new experience, and reward generously with treats, play, or love. Keep outings short, and if your puppy seems tired or overwhelmed, it's okay to leave and try again later!