

HAPPY DOG = HAPPY OWNER

Socialization is the process by which a dog learns how to behave appropriately with others in its environment. Puppies must learn to interact with adults, children, dogs, and other pets in a variety of social situations, from the park to the front yard.

Why is socialization important?

If dogs do not become socialized, they may become anxious, fearful and antisocial with people and other animals. Behavior problems are a leading cause of pet relinquishment to shelters and lead to the death of more animals per year than any infectious disease.

How do I go about introducing my puppy (or dog) to the world?

Invite family and friends (one at a time) and their pets to visit you and your puppy. Once your puppy knows how to sit, have him sit when he meets a new person and have that person give him a treat. Once adequately vaccinated, take your puppy on walks and short car outings. It is important for your puppy to meet all types of people, and especially children, even if no children live with you. If your puppy is not exposed to children, he may react poorly to them when he is older. As your puppy matures, expose it to sounds such as alarms, airplanes, sirens and other neighborhood noises so that it becomes used to them.

When should I take my puppy (or dog) to obedience class?

Ideally, obedience classes should start between 8–16 weeks of age. Obedience class is a great way to expose your puppy to new situations, dogs, and people and to teach him good behavior when he is most eager to learn.

What are other ways to socialize my dog?

Doggy Day Care: Consider taking your dog to doggy day care (or play care) while you are at work. Regular play with other dogs in day care will build your dog's confidence and improve your dog's ability to communicate and interact. It will help prevent shyness, fear, and aggression. Plus, instead of coming home to a dog that has excess energy, your dog will be tuckered out-and your house will still be standing!

Dog Park: The dog park is a great place to exercise your dog and give it the chance to socialize with other dogs. Be sure to adhere to leash laws and/or off leash rules. Some parks allow off-leash dogs, but only during certain times of

day. Watch your dog closely and do not let it ingest anything. Recent dog park poisonings necessitate extra caution.

Agility: Agility is a sport for a dog and a handler. Following the handler's directions given by voice, body, and hand signals, the dog negotiates a course filled with obstacles. The emphasis is on speed and accuracy with the ultimate goal of a "clean run." Competitions test the handler's skills and the speed and accuracy of the dog against the clock and against other dog/handler teams. It builds a dog's confidence and encourages a strong bond between handlers and their dogs.

Flyball: Flyball is a team sport for dogs that involves a relay-style race. Each dog races to a flyball box, where it must step on a flyball box pedal to release a mechanism that flips a tennis ball from the cup. The dog retrieves the ball and returns over four jumps. As each dog crossed the start/finish line, another dog from their team is released. The first team to have four dogs successfully complete a run wins. Dogs like to have purpose-a task to do. Training for and competing in flyball competitions gives your dog such a purpose. Plus, it's an activity you can do together, thereby increasing your bond.