

Whole Dog Journal™



The Puppy Socialization Exposure Checklist

Contrary to popular belief, socializing a new puppy is NOT about getting pets and having play dates with every person in sight. You need to be mindful!

By Mardi Richmond, CPDT-KA, CC

One of the things I've discovered in my puppy classes is that many people assume socialization is simply about getting your dog around lots of people to be petted and plenty of dogs to play with. This can be a piece of the socialization package, but remember that the goal of socialization is to get your pup accustomed to and comfortable with the world around him.

Puppies need to be exposed in a pleasant way to the following things. Remember: don't expose your puppy to everything at once, and please please do it in a way that is not forceful or overwhelming.

Puppy Exposure to Kinds of People



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- infants
- toddlers
- older kids/teens
- adults/old people
- men and women
- people of different ethnicities/races
- big and small people
- people with sunglasses

- people wearing hoods, hats, backpacks, and umbrellas



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- people in uniforms: police, medical, firefighters
- people with canes, crutches, or in wheelchairs

Puppy Exposure to People Doing Things

- running
- throwing balls
- kneeling down to garden
- doing yoga or tai chi
- standing on chairs or ladders
- using tools
- pushing brooms
- carrying bags and boxes
- vacuuming



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Puppy Exposure to Animals

- other dogs/dogs that look different to your pup
- cats
- horses
- chickens
- goats
- any other animal your dog may come into contact with



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Puppy Exposure to Things That Move

- bicycles
- skateboards
- running kids

- kites
- motorcycles
- cars
- trucks
- fire engines
- running animals

Puppy Exposure to New Places

- your car
- the veterinarian's office
- parks
- beaches
- shopping areas
- sidewalks with cars going by
- areas where you might walk or hike or vacation
- other people's houses
- pet stores



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Noises That Come with Everyday Life

- blow dryers
- kitchen appliances
- vacuums
- doorbells
- walk-sign beeps
- trucks backing up
- neighbors in their yards
- kids yelling
- babies crying
- wind and thunder noises
- fireworks



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Puppy Exposure to Different Surfaces

- grass
- gravel
- pavement
- carpet
- shiny floors
- mulch
- sand
- wet surfaces outside
- the bathtub



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Puppy Exposure to Handling

- touching for vet visits
- grooming
- patting heads
- hugging (Note: See "[How Dogs Interpret Your Body Language \(/issues/16_12/features/How-Dogs-Interpret-You_20875-1.html\)](https://www.whispermagazine.com/issues/16_12/features/How-Dogs-Interpret-You_20875-1.html)," to learn why WDJ does NOT recommend hugging dogs; we suggest you expose your puppy to hugs, however, because he is bound to receive one from somebody sooner or later)
- invasive interactions, such as people invading their space, taking things from them, hugging them without warning, and getting into their food



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Other Puppy Exposure Ideas

- heavy rain
- people with surfboards
- boats
- tall buildings
- wild animals like skunks, raccoons and groundhogs



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- [Socialization \(/topics/socialization.html\)](/topics/socialization.html)
- [Stress \(/topics/stress.html\)](/topics/stress.html)
- [Vet Trips \(/topics/vet_trips.html\)](/topics/vet_trips.html)
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