

SOCIALIZATION

At eight weeks, your pup has been “group socialized” within the litter and in our home. It is VERY important to do “solo socialization” between 8-12 weeks. This is not an option if you want a well adjusted, confident and social adult dog.

How do you do this? LOTS OF EXPOSURE! Read below...

The socialization window closes at 12 weeks. From eight to twelve weeks is when the puppy learns what things are happy, friendly, normal, and fun; anything else gets a big "Danger!" sign on it. That means every noise, texture, sight, smell, person, animal, event, and challenge is going to be perceived as a possible threat if they do not encounter it before twelve weeks. The way you set the puppy up for success in life, and create a dog who approaches every challenge with bright optimism, assumes every person is wonderful, and communicates well with every dog, is to expose him or her SOLO to everything the dog can reasonably expect to encounter. And it MUST be done before 12 weeks. Doing this correctly as a new puppy owner is practically a full-time job. Every single day you have to think "Who can I take this dog to see; where can we go; what smells can we smell; what textures can I put under her feet."

NOTE OF CAUTION: Your puppy isn't fully vaccinated yet and you need to beware of other dogs! The only place puppy buyers shouldn't be taking puppies is high-dog-traffic areas like the floor at the vet's office, dog parks, and pet supply stores (those should wait until 14 weeks after finishing vaccines. If you don't know all the dogs on your street, don't even put her down on the sidewalk. Carry her into houses and schools and so on. But she MUST get out of your home. So don't go to the dog beach, but DO go to your aunt and uncle's beach. Don't go to the dog park, but DO go to puppy kindergarten or puppy playgroup as long as the instructor requires that every puppy begin vaccines before attending. DO take walks in the woods, in fields, on college quads. DO go to schools, preschools, retirement homes, churches, banks, restaurants, and every other venue you can think of. DO make sure your puppy has met multiple people of every age (dogs cannot generalize, so a two-year-old is a

VERY different creature from a seven-year-old and also very different from a teenager), gender, clothing style, facial hair, ethnic group, etc.

Seek out sounds: garbage trucks, semis, golf carts, airplanes. Animals – sheep, goats, cows, horses, chickens, geese. Again, remember that dogs cannot generalize. Meeting friendly chickens does not mean that ducks are also safe; ducks are aliens. You need to go after every single species you can find.

Socialization issues are REAL, they are quantifiable, they are often tragic. They are often the result of well-meaning breeders and owners who are worried about disease exposure. But, as one researcher I read said (very wisely), "Parvo kills in a few days, but the behavioral issues caused by lack of socialization will kill them in a few years."

So you be as cautious as you possibly can be, you avoid dog-trafficked areas, you keep the dog-to-dog contact limited to friendly, vaccinated dogs at home or in a puppy K. **And you push the dog socialization VERY hard once the 14-week shots have been given.** You do NOT keep the puppy safe and concealed in the living room until that point, unless you want to risk behavioral problems.