

Puppy socialisation checklist

Puppies need socialisation to help them grow up to be friendly, well-behaved dogs.

Before 8 weeks of age, you can begin socialisation in the home. From 8 weeks of age, you can begin to introduce your puppy to public places **but must carry them** to keep them safe and healthy. To protect them from diseases, puppies can only meet other healthy, fully vaccinated dogs and cats.

The goal of socialisation is that your puppy has positive experiences, not neutral or bad ones. Use treats to keep things enjoyable. Socialisation is best done little and often so your puppy isn't overwhelmed. If your puppy is scared or unsure, stop for the day.

This checklist can be used to track what your puppy has been introduced to. You don't have to tick everything off but the more the better!

Puppy socialisation checklist:

SCORE	RESPONSE	NEXT STEPS
	Relaxed, playful, explores	Keep up the good work!
	Won't approach, freezes	Add more distance/lower the volume Pair with treats or toys
	Growl, nip, struggles or hides	Stop for the day <i>Next time try:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> starting further away or at lower volume pairing with treats or toys



Keep your puppy safe!

Until they are fully vaccinated only introduce your puppy to healthy, vaccinated dogs and carry them in areas where unvaccinated dogs may have been.



HANDLING	Exposure			Notes
	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	
Specific task				
Being picked up				
Holding puppy in your lap				
Cradling in your arms on their back				
Hugging the puppy*				
Checking the ears				
Examining mouth/brushing teeth				
Trimming nails (or pretending)				
Brushing/touching tail				
Wearing a collar				
Wearing a harness				
Walking on a leash				
Brushing				
Wiping with a towel				
Bathing				
<p><i>*SPCA does not generally recommend hugging dogs as many dogs find this uncomfortable or scary. However, because people may hug dogs, it is important we prepare our puppies to tolerate this.</i></p>				

PEOPLE*	Exposure			Notes
	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	
Specific task				
Women				
Men				
Men with beards				
Tall people				
People wearing overalls and boots				
People of various ethnicities				
Elderly				
Children				
People with disabilities				
People wearing hats, helmets				
People wearing glasses/sunglasses				
People wearing hoodies				
People wearing backpacks				
Posties/delivery people				
<p><i>* Don't allow people to grab at the puppy or force them to interact. Puppies should be allowed to approach people on their own and get treats for coming up.</i></p>				

OTHER ANIMALS	Exposure			Notes
	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	
Specific task				
Friendly, vaccinated dogs				
Friendly, calm cats				
Horses and other livestock				
Poultry/birds/ducks				
<i>*Remember – avoid your puppy coming into contact unknown or unvaccinated dogs.</i>				

SOUNDS*	Exposure			Notes
	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	
Specific task				
Thunder				
Fireworks				
Vacuum cleaner				
Washing machine/dryer				
Traffic (like downtown in a city)				
Rubbish trucks				
Sirens				
Dogs barking				
Doorbells/door knocking				
Babies crying				
Kids playing				
Pots clanging (kitchen sounds)				
<i>*Videos can be used. Begin at low volumes and gradually increase the volume, making sure to pair with treats.</i>				

SURFACES	Exposure			Notes
	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	
Specific task				
Carpet				
Slippery floors (e.g. laminated flooring)				
Stairs				
Roads				
Grass (dry and wet)				
Mud and puddles				
Unstable surfaces				
<i>*Remember – avoid your puppy coming into contact with areas where unvaccinated dogs may have been.</i>				

PLACES*	Exposure			Notes
	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	
Specific task				
Unfamiliar buildings/houses				
Residential streets				
Car rides (gradually increase time)				
High traffic city street				
Train stations				
Veterinary clinic				
Outside schools				
Parks				
Beach				
Puppy classes				
<i>*Remember - your puppy will need to be carried in public places until vaccinated.</i>				

OBJECTS	Exposure			Notes
	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	
Specific task				
Umbrellas				
Wheelie bins/ wheelbarrows				
Prams/buggies				
Wheel chairs				
Skateboards				
Bicycles/scooters				
Cars				
Motorcycles				
Buses/Trucks				
Lawn Mower				