

PUPPY SOCIALISATION

CREATING A BLUEPRINT

Build up your puppy's experiences of the world around them in a careful manner to ensure that they develop a relaxed and confident outlook on life and the world around them.

Early experiences shape your puppy's emotional blueprint so it's important to set them up for success from the very beginning.





WHAT IS SOCIALISATION?

Socialisation is a term you've likely heard before, But what exactly does it mean and why is it so important?

BUILDING A BLUEPRINT

Socialisation is the process whereby our puppies learn how to interact with the world around them. They learn social skills with dogs, people and other animals, as well as building an understanding of how things work in the world around them.

They learn what is safe and enjoyable as well as what is scary and should be avoided. In order to help our puppies to develop into confident, resilient adult dogs, we need to ensure that we are careful with how we introduce them to new experiences.

WHAT'S THE GOAL?

The goal of socialisation is to ensure our puppies are well-adjusted and feel confident with everything they will likely experience throughout their life.

We are looking for them to be calm and relaxed, not easily startled by things and certainly not obsessive or over excited by the world around them.

It's really important that as well as allowing our puppies to interact with people and dogs, we also teach them the art of watching at a distance whilst having fun with you instead.

This will help a lot when it comes to getting your puppy's focus or calling them back to you when they're off the lead.

1

Build positive associations

2

Allow your puppy to watch from a distance

3

Don't force your puppy to confront their fears

LESS IS MORE

It is really tempting to allow our puppies to meet as many dogs and people as possible during their development.

However if we allow our puppies to interact with everyone there are 2 common issues that arise:

1. Our puppy becomes over excited whenever they see another dog or person. They know seeing people and dogs is really fun and they become excited and desperate to get to them. This will lead to problems with focus on us and could result in our puppy ignoring calls to come back when off lead.
2. Our puppy becomes overwhelmed. Some puppies are wary of new people and if we don't know what signs to watch for when they are uncomfortable, it's really easy to create a negative association with strangers. This can lead to fear, growling and barking at unfamiliar people.

"BE YOUR PUPPY'S ADVOCATE"

Rather than focusing on the number of interactions, it's more important to ensure the quality of the interactions our puppies do have.

If your puppy holds back or moves away allow them the choice not to interact. Prevent people and dogs from forcing our puppy to engage as this will build up their trust and confidence far more than overwhelming them will.

Allow your puppy the chance to approach a dog or person in their own time. Have the stranger crouch and offer their hand out to the side of their body, away from your puppy. If your puppy chooses to approach, make sure the person doesn't grab them. Be your puppy's advocate and prevent bad experiences by standing up for what's in their best interest.

If your puppy seeks contact, keep interactions short and enjoyable before encouraging your puppy to move away with you again.



"GIVE YOUR PUPPY THE CHOICE TO INTERACT OR NOT"



WHAT ABOUT LOCKDOWN?

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought many changes to our everyday lives. With many of us in lockdown, unable to leave our homes except for a single form of exercise or other essential tasks such as shopping, knowing how to socialise a puppy has been a huge concern for many new owners.

GO OUTSIDE

During the current situation you are still able to take your puppy outside. If they haven't completed their vaccinations you can carry them in your arms or use a stroller.

Allow your puppy to watch neighbours passing by, dogs going on their walks or traffic driving past. Make good associations by pairing these experiences

with happy praise and some tasty treats.

DRIVE TO BUSIER LOCATIONS

If you live in a quiet rural area be sure to drive your puppy to busier locations to watch the world go by.

Take them to the supermarket with you and sit in the boot of the car together watching people, trolleys and cars passing slowly.

Take in the different sounds and smells in the environment. Even without leaving your car, your puppy will be learning so much about the world around them.

Take your puppy on a variety of essential trips with you and build up their positive experiences.

ARE THERE BENEFITS?

1

Social distancing will ensure that your puppy doesn't become overwhelmed by interactions before they are ready.

2

You can ensure pleasant experiences from a distance which will improve your puppy's confidence and trust in you.

3

Not allowing your puppy to play with every dog/person will set them up for success when training focus and recall.



TOP 6 EXERCISES FOR PANDEMIC PUPPY SOCIALIZATION

01 New Objects

Create a confidence course with unfamiliar objects for your puppy to investigate. Praise them and drop treats as they investigate. Stay close for support and remember never to lure your puppy into a situation where they're scared. Allow them time to explore at their own pace.

02 Sounds

There are lots of sounds which will be unfamiliar to a puppy living in lockdown. E.g. crowd noise, children playing, busy traffic, building site noise. Play these noises whilst your puppy enjoys a stuffed Kong. Start with a low volume and increase gradually. Make sure your puppy is relaxed throughout.

04 The Doorbell

With no visitors because of lockdown, your puppy won't be familiar with the doorbell. Practice pushing the bell and scattering treats for your puppy to make a good association. Also practice having a family member stand outside and knock on the door whilst you praise and treat your puppy.

03 Dress Up

Yourself not your puppy! At the moment we can't meet a variety of people which means we need to get creative with fancy dress. Include sunglasses, hats, walking sticks, wigs, hi-viz jackets, gloves, bulky clothes, masks and PPE. Let your puppy sniff the items before putting them on slowly. Praise and treat your puppy throughout.

05 Observe

Sit with your puppy in their pen outside the front of your house. Watch the world go by whilst your puppy enjoys a Kong or other food puzzle. You will be getting your puppy used to the sounds, sights and smells of your neighbourhood whilst not making everything overexciting

06 Handling

With routine vet visits and grooming sessions on hold it is up to us to prepare our puppies for these experiences. Practice lifting your puppy onto a table with a piece of non slip matting on. Feel over their back, legs, tail, ears, neck, muzzle, eyes. Go slow and reward your puppy lots.

SOCIALISATION CHECKLIST

PEOPLE

- Men
- Women
- Teenager
- Elderly
- Toddler
- Baby
- Uniform
- Crutches
- Wheelchair
- Walking Stick
- Jogger
- Hats
- Beards
- Masks
- Gloves
- Glasses
- High Vis
- Jewellery
- Sunglasses
- Helmets
- Fancy Dress
- Bulky Clothes

PLACES

- Town
- Woodland
- Beach
- Moor
- Field

SURFACES

- Concrete
- Wood
- Tiles
- Grass
- Lino
- Marble
- Carpet
- Rubber
- Ice
- Water
- Metal Drains
- Wobbly (with care)
- Uneven
- Gravel
- Tarmac
- Sand
- Wood
- Stairs (in moderation)

ANIMALS

- Puppies
- Large Dogs
- Small Dogs
- Cats
- Horses
- Sheep
- Cows
- Deer
- Chickens

VEHICLES

- Cars
- Buses
- Lorries
- Motorbikes
- Trains
- Emergency Vehicles
- Skateboards
- Bikes
- Rollerblades
- Wheelchairs
- Mobility Scooters
- Planes
- Helicopters
- Pushchairs
- Bin Lorries

SCARY STUFF

- Floating bags
- Wheelie Bins
- Balloons
- Vacuum Cleaners
- Brooms
- Automatic Doors
- Lifts
- Umbrellas
- Hairdryers
- Shopping Trolleys
- Kites
- Masks

REMEMBER...



Experiences at a distance
are just as important as close
up interactions



Give your puppy a chance to
decide what to do. If they are
unsure give them time to
make up their mind



Never force your puppy to
confront their fears. Doing so
could have long lasting
implications

ENRICHMENT IDEAS CHECKLIST

SENSORY

SCENT

- Collect animal bedding
- Create a sensory garden with different plants/herbs
- Collect items on your walk for investigation later

TASTE

- Enjoy a taster board of novel foods including meats, fruits, veggies
(check safe for dogs first)

TOUCH

- Explore different textures - lickimats, wooden roots, antlers
- Different surfaces - sand, mud, water, tree bark, grass, gravel
- Body Massage (gentle)
- SOUNDS
- Wind Chimes
- Birdsong
- Coastal sounds
- Animal sounds
- Sounds Playlist

FOOD BASED

- Towel with treats in
- Noise box
- Recycled bottle roller
- Stuffed Kong
- Muffin tin with tennis balls
- Slow feeder bowl
- Destruction box
- Toilet tube fortune cookies
- Buried treasure
- Treat bobbing
- Snuffle mat
- Scatter feeding
- Treats in a ball pit
- Treats under an upturned laundry basket
- Spinning bottle treat dispenser
- Frozen broth and fruit/veggie ice cubes
- Lickimat
- Lotus ball/Clam
- Buffalo horn
- Yak milk chew

PHYSICAL

- Digging - Sandpit/ Paddling Pool
- Exploring
- Climbing On
- Climbing In
- Moving Under
- Moving Through
- Front Paws On
- Chasing bubbles
- Wobbly surfaces

SOCIAL

- Watch the World
- Interact with People
- Interact with Dogs
- Watch Animals
- Investigate New places together
- Settle in a Cafe/Pub
- Puppy led walk
- Trip to the woods
- Trip to the beach
- Trip into town
- Trip to the park
- Trip to the pet shop
- Visit a friends house
- Take a car ride

BRAIN GAMES

- Puzzle Feeders - sliding platforms, treat wobblers, rolling treat balls, food under cups/plant pots,
- Clicker games - reward incremental interactions with a novel object
- Hide and seek - puppy finds you
- Search for favourite toy/food treats
- Training games - hand touch, peekaboo, down etc

TOYS

- Tuggy (gentle)
- Toy hold & parade
- Chase - flirt pole, whip toys (careful)
- Sheep Balls
- Unstuffing an old toy
- Squeaky balls
- Rustling plushie

REMEMBER...



Take care with any activities involving chasing, climbing or moving over wobbly surfaces



Don't leave your puppy unattended with any enrichment activity



Take new experiences at your puppy's pace. Never force them to do things they are worried about