

SOCIALIZATION CHECKLIST FOR PUPPIES 6 - 20 WEEKS OF AGE



CHECKLIST

ENVIRONMENTS

- Puppy classes
- Vet clinic
- Grooming salon
- Pet store
- Shopping mall
- Work / office
- Friend / family's house
- Park / playground
- Bus stop / subway station
- Downtown intersection
- Beach

VEHICLES

- Car
- Bus
- Streetcar
- Subway
- Garbage truck
- Bicycle
- Skateboard
- Rollerblades
- Motorcycle

BUILDINGS

- Lobby
- Elevator
- Hallway
- Stairwell
- Parking garage

SOUNDS

- Rain / hail
- Thunderstorms
- Traffic
- Sirens
- Construction
- Loud music
- Whistle
- Children playing
- Screaming / yelling
- Fireworks
- Video games

ANIMALS

- Puppies
- Friendly adult dogs
- Kittens
- Friendly adult cats
- Birds
- Ducks / geese
- Rodents
- Rabbits
- Guinea pigs
- Ferrets
- Reptiles
- Horses
- Livestock

SURFACES

- Carpet
- Hardwood
- Laminate
- Rubber
- Concrete
- Marble
- Stainless steel
- Wobbly / unsteady
- Stairs
- Grass
- Soil /mud
- Gravel
- Puddles
- Snow / ice
- Metal grates

IN THE HOME

- Phone
- Alarm clock
- Doorbell
- Washer / dryer
- Shower
- Hair dryer
- Appliances
- Smoke alarm

NOVELTY ITEMS

- Vacuum
- Broom
- Mop
- Pots / pans
- Trash bags
- Garbage cans
- Boxes
- Luggage
- Ironing board
- Umbrella
- Stroller
- Lawn mower
- Rake
- Shovel
- Power tools
- Ladder

PEOPLE

- Infants
- Toddlers
- Children
- Teenagers
- Adults
- Seniors
- Male
- Female
- Fair skinned
- Dark skinned
- Tall
- Short
- Thin
- Heavy
- Varied hair styles
- Quiet / nervous
- Loud / boisterous

SCENTS

- Perfume
- Smoker
- Alcohol

APPEARANCE

- Facial Hair
- Sunglasses
- Hats / hoodies
- Hijab / Burqa
- Gloves
- Masks
- Costumes
- Winter coat
- Boots
- Rain coat
- Scarf

WEATHER

- Rain
- Snow
- Wind

MOBILITY

- Cane
- Crutches
- Wheelchair
- Walker
- Limp
- Shuffle
- Jogger

UNIFORMS

- Veterinarian
- Vet Tech
- Police officer
- Firefighter
- Security guard
- Mail courier
- Sporting helmet

MISCELLANEOUS

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DIRECTIONS

Socialization is all about creating a positive association with a novel experience or stimuli. The stimulus should occur and then food should follow. If you see signs of conflict or fear, create distance and try again, or consider taking a break. Don't be afraid to pick up your puppy or calmly comfort them if they are afraid, but avoid overreacting which might make it more scary for them.

SIGNS OF CONFLICT

- Yawning
- Licking lips/nose
- Turning away
- Avoiding eye contact
- Squinting
- "Snoofing" (half sneezing)
- "Wet dog" shake off
- Scratching self
- Rolling over onto back
- Sniffing the ground
- Lifting front paw
- Mounting / humping

SIGNS OF FEAR

- Wide eyes
- Ears pulled back or flattened
- Freezing
- Crouching
- Tail tucked
- Hiding
- Shaking
- Pacing
- Panting
- Running away / escaping
- Seeking close contact
- High pitched barking

EXPOSURE VS. SOCIALIZATION

We often make the mistake of assuming that simply exposing our dog to a stimulus is "socialization", however this could not be further from the truth. As you can read above, socialization is the process of creating a positive association with a previously neutral stimulus through gradual exposures and positive experiences. If we are simply exposing our dog to a stimulus and we fail to create a positive association, we throw caution to the wind and the result may be that the dog associates sometimes potentially scary (the feeling of being unable to escape is a common one), or it remains as neutral and is left open for interpretation later.

TOLERANCE VS. ENJOYMENT

"Oh my dog is fine with this." This is something we hear all too frequently when we work with clients and attempt to create positive associations for their puppy. I'm "fine" going to the dentist, but do I enjoy it? No. Absolutely not. This is not what we want for our puppies! We want them to feel as though the world is a safe, predictable and wonderful place and that new things aren't scary - they're fantastic! The only way to do that is through creating a predictably wonderful association when they encounter new people, places, things. We want to see happy anticipation rather than tolerance. Tolerance levels change quickly, so don't miss your opportunity!

DISTANCE IS YOUR FRIEND

When introducing your puppy to something or someone new, don't feel the need to get up close and personal right away. Go at your dog's pace and let them set the safe distance. Start from a distance where your dog notices the novel stimulus rather than waiting until they are "reacting" to it. Create a great association at a distance and eventually your dog will want to get closer and investigate. No rush!