

Socialization Pitfalls

Socialization Done Right

The first months of a dog's life are a critical time for socialization with the people, places, and things that are part of their world. Socialization maximizes a young pup's quality of life, and continued socialization can empower older dogs to be more confident and well-behaved. It's clear that we *should* socialize, but it is less clear exactly *how* to do it—and getting it right is important.

TOO MUCH, TOO SOON

Experiences that seem trivial to us may be overwhelming for dogs. Break them down into achievable steps and go at the dog's pace. For example, a dog park is likely too much, too soon for a pup. Try one new friend first and work up from there when your dog is confident at each step.



Exposure alone is not socialization. It must be *positive* exposure. If your dog isn't having a positive experience, you may get the opposite of the effect you want. What is "bad" to a dog may not seem bad to us, so observe the dog's body language for signs of stress.

"BAD" EXPERIENCES

Manners and socialization can be different. Incorporate basic training into your socialization to ensure desired behaviors like calm greetings rather than jumping on people and other dogs.

OVERDOING IT

TIPS

Greeting guests: Once your dog enjoys meeting people, use visitors to reinforce polite greetings. Coach visitors to approach only when your dog is sitting. **First bath:** A few days before the real bath, sprinkle treats on the tub floor. Do this until your dog is comfortable before adding water.

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