



## Socialization & Habituation Checklist

Check off weekly encounters and be sure to carry treats for you and others to offer your pup intermittently. If you notice fear, focus on those situations in the coming weeks.

PUP ENCOUNTERS	12-13 weeks	14-15 weeks	16-17 weeks	18-19 weeks	20-21 weeks	23-24 weeks	25-26 weeks
Children (including Babies & Toddlers)							
Young Adults							
Adults							
Elderly							
People Using Wheelchairs, Walkers, and Canes							
Loud People							
Looming People							
People Moving Erratically							
Uniformed People							
People Wearing Hats							
People with Beards							
People Carrying Umbrellas or Bags							
Puppies							
Well Socialized Adult Dogs of Varying Sizes with Varying Play Styles							
Other Animals							
Horses (i.e. Police Horses)							
Friend's Homes							
City Streets							
Veterinary Office							
Grooming Parlor							
Parks (Ballgames, Kites, etc.)							
Nearby Children's Playgrounds							
Different Types of Flooring							
Bicycles/Skateboards/Motorcycles							
Noisy Appliances (Vacuums, Blenders, Hair Dryers)							
Riding in a Car, Bus, Subway or Other Mode of Transport							

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# Socialization & Habituation

*by Andrea Arden*

Adult dog behavior, responses to people, other animals and various stimuli (i.e. sights, sounds, surfaces) are shaped by your dog's hard-wired genetic makeup and the influence of their experiences and education during their youth. Each dog is an individual, and as such will have particular preferences. However, socialization and habituation serve to influence the dog's future behavior by helping them to develop a degree of familiarity, tolerance and ideally enjoyment from a wide variety of people, places, things, and situations.

**Socialization** is the processes of providing your dog with positive social experiences that will help them rehearse and become prepared for social interactions throughout their lifetime. The people and animals your puppy meets will strongly influence their attitude and future behavior. Primary socialization begins with the pup's mother and littermates, then the pup's new family. Secondary socialization involves people and animals outside of the home.

**Habituation** is the process of providing continued exposure to stimuli over time, so that your pup develops the ability to have a decreased reaction to them. Initial exposure to stimulus, whether loud street noises, vacuum cleaners, people speaking loudly or riding by on a bike, is likely to elicit a sort of "What is that!" response from a puppy. The more positive exposure a puppy has to a particular stimulus, the more familiar and comfortable they will become with it and similar stimuli.

While a dog has the capacity to learn throughout it's lifetime, the process of socialization and habituation should ideally begin during early puppyhood. Puppies appear particularly responsive to experiences during the first 22 weeks of their life. This is a time when they are most apt to absorb new information, which means socialization experiences with puppies and well socialized adult dogs, adults and children, and exposure to various environments should occur during this time.

Living in the human world, especially in a busy city environment, can be overwhelming for a dog. You want to help your pup develop the ability to bounce back quickly and overcome any potential concerns or fears. A failure to do so could be the cause of serious future fear or aggression problems.

Keep in mind that socialization is not just a numbers game (i.e. meeting as many people or dogs as possible). It is about being selective about what your dog is exposed to so it is a positive experience. With that said, meeting a variety of people and other animals, and being exposed to a variety of environments and situations is of primary concern. Just be sure to be discerning so that your puppy is gradually exposed to people, places and things in a manner that bodes well for success.

## Puppy Training Class & Play Groups

**Puppy Training Classes and Play Groups are important parts of socialization.**

**Look at our website for a schedule of dates, times and locations.**

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