

# DOGS AND PUPPIES: Socializing Your Puppy



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It's a big world out there, and your puppy will encounter all of it - people, places, other dogs - for the first time. How can you teach him to respond confidently to new experiences? Don't wait! It's best for puppies to be exposed to as much as possible in a safe and appropriate manner by 4 months of age.

## **NEW ENVIRONMENTS**

Get your puppy off to a good start by gradually introducing him to your home. Start him out with his own space - a crate or a fenced area where you can confine him and where he feels safe. Slowly let him explore other areas of the house. As he learns to behave appropriately, give him more freedom to wander on his own.

Introduce potentially frightening items, such as a vacuum, slowly. For example, let him get used to seeing it in off mode, then turn it on, then let him see it in action from a safe distance.

To get him accustomed to being outdoors, start by holding him while walking short distances in your neighborhood. Take him on short walks, using different routes to build on his experience. If he refuses to proceed, do not force him; reward him for courageously entering new areas.

## **CAR RIDES**

If your puppy's only experience in a car is going to the vet, he will likely resist riding with you. Drive him to more enjoyable places such as a park as well. Play with him in the back seat for a few minutes before leaving. He may feel more comfortable riding in a crate.

## **NEW PEOPLE**

When people ask to pet your puppy, teach him to sit first. This will discourage him from jumping up as a greeting. Never force him to receive attention he is uncomfortable with. For example, don't hold him while someone pets him. If he is shy, have the new person offer him a treat to encourage interaction. Teach children how to touch him gently.

## **OTHER DOGS**

Give your puppy opportunities to interact with other dogs, especially puppies, as early as possible. Gradually introduce him to your friends' calm, gentle dogs. Puppy socialization classes are great and safe. Avoid dog parks - they are not ideal for socializing a puppy to other dogs. Additionally, dog parks can expose puppies to harmful illnesses.

## **REWARDS**

As your puppy tries new experiences, be sure to give immediate rewards for good behavior. Puppies respond to eye contact, praise, attention, petting, and, of course, treats!



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