

Socializing Your New Puppy with Your Dog

When should your new puppy be socialized?

This is especially important when it comes to exposure to children and other dogs. If you don't have your own children, make a concerted effort to find a willing parent to help socialize your puppy. To ensure your puppy has a good impression of children, introduce him to well-behaved children over five who are experienced with dogs. Be sure they understand how to be gentle with a puppy before introductions. Keep introducing him to friendly adult dogs and puppies.

Three- to six-month-old puppies can begin to learn important commands like sit, stay, down, come, leave it, and drop it in earnest. Although they should already have been introduced to some basic commands, they are now old enough to understand and retain the lessons. They still have plenty of puppy energy and curiosity, though, so this is no time to let your guard down.

Six to Twelve Months By the age of six months, a puppy can go anywhere. Take him camping and on hikes. Take him to outdoor parties and to a child's soccer game. Take him to a riding stable that allows dogs so he can get a look at the horses (keep him on leash and under full control). Take him to street fairs and practice heeling. Allow people to pet him so he has the chance to meet plenty of strangers.

Puppies at this age are still highly energetic, and they are nearly full grown, with adult teeth and strength. Cute puppy misbehavior becomes annoying and even threatening by this age. Jumping up and nipping can potentially cause major injury when done by an 80-pound teenager. Not surprisingly, this is the time many active, untrained dogs land in animal shelters.

It's vital to keep up the training during this time. Sometimes puppies can become stubborn or conveniently forget training at this age. Maintaining daily training helps counter these tendencies. You can enroll your teenaged puppy in a more advanced training class, where the skills that were learned in puppy kindergarten can be reinforced and new commands like heel and long stays can be learned.

Your pup may need an increase in exercise and outside stimulus at this age, but remember he's still not done growing. Jumping, running on slippery surfaces, and other jarring activities should be discouraged until he is fully grown. However, because he has received his shots and is out of the prime danger zone for infectious diseases, he can regularly visit dog parks and other dog-friendly places where he is sure to get plenty of playtime and interaction with other dogs.

Socializing and training a puppy appropriately throughout his first year of development produces an adult dog who is unafraid of new situations, is in less danger because he is under voice control, and is well received by friends and strangers alike. This puppy is well on his way to a healthy, happy adulthood.

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