

Socializing Your New Puppy with Your Dog

When should your new puppy be socialized?

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Before you begin teaching your puppy about the world around him, it helps to understand how puppies develop. Much like children, puppies go through different stages of development. During a child's development, she learns such skills as how to interact with other human beings, how to coordinate her body, and how to use her mind. During a puppy's developmental stages, he learns such skills as being independent of his mother and siblings, accepting humans as his pack members, and following commands. Socializing and training should be done in accordance with your puppy's natural development. Pushing young puppies into potentially frightening situations or expecting too much out of an immature pup can backfire.

Newborn to Two Months A puppy's most important development takes place during the time he is with his mother and siblings. During the first 20 days of life, a puppy learns to coordinate his muscles and recognize his family members. From the ages of 21 to 35 days, he learns the proper way to behave around his canine family and learns to accept people. At the age of 5 weeks, the puppy begins to venture away from his mother and siblings and become a bit more independent. While with his mother and siblings, the puppy learns how to play and interact with other dogs. He also learns to control his bite and share with his littermates. If he is not exposed to people during this time, he can develop fears that will inhibit his ability to function well in human society. If he is isolated from other dogs or taken away from his mother and littermates too early, he may develop a fear of other dogs that can lead to dog aggression.

Puppies that leave their litters before eight weeks should receive extra socialization with friendly dogs to ensure they learn how to positively interact with other animals. Failure to provide this socialization can lead to a lifetime of anxiety and severe dog aggression.

Two to Three Months Around the age of 8 or 9 weeks, most puppies go off to their new homes. They adapt best to their new surroundings at 9 weeks of age.

During the ages of 9 to 12 weeks, it's especially important for a puppy to be exposed to a number of different objects and situations so he can learn to accept them as part of his environment. Puppies at this age have not developed complete immunity to the many diseases that can plague them, so it's important to keep them away from strange dogs and other puppies during this time. However, that doesn't mean he shouldn't be exposed to a lot of fun and upbeat experiences. Take him for walks to the park, to your local coffee shop, and to friends' homes. Do not let him sniff feces, which can carry dangerous bacteria.