



Socialization Course

Expose Your Puppy to the World

Exposure vs. Meeting & Greeting

One of the biggest myths about socialization is that your puppy needs to MEET a whole bunch of people and a whole bunch of dogs in order to be “socialized” and this could not be further from the truth.

Socialization is about EXPOSURES that are:

- Short
- Fun
- Safe

What is an Exposure?

Exposure is about giving your puppy the opportunity to explore a new environment and these experiences can include:

- New smells
- New sights
- New noises
- New tactile surfaces

Examples of Exposures

- A quiet spot in your local park
- A school parking lot on the weekend
- A church parking lot during the week
- Other business parking lots during quiet, closed or “off” hours
- Watching people, dogs, bikes, cars, etc. from a safe distance
- Walking on different surfaces (i.e. grass, gravel, pavement, dirt, etc.)
- Walking up/down ramps, steps, curbs or climbing under/over obstacles (i.e. luring under a park bench)

Gently invite your puppy to voluntarily come out of your car and explore the area (sniffing, listening and watching whatever is happening in the environment). Take her lead and be mindful of not forcing her.

If your puppy is feeling more reserved or cautious about her socialization experience, just find a quiet place to sit and hang out and let your puppy just watch the world go by while you **Label and Feed** (see the next lesson).

If your puppy is totally comfortable in the environment, look for stairs, ramps or different surfaces to play around on. Let the puppy walk around and explore safely. This should be fun for your puppy and involve lots of yummy treats!

Key Concepts

- Let your puppy take the lead on whether she just sits and watches, explores the environment or meets and greets people/dogs.
- If your puppy is between 3 and 16 weeks (and even up to 5 months) she is at a developmental stage where **choice and control** are of the utmost importance and it's perfectly OK for her to say "no" to an experience or interaction. Respecting her "no" may protect her from developing fear and behavior issues as she matures. Even if she doesn't get out of your car, she is still being exposed to new smells, sounds and sights!
- Carefully watch your puppy for signs of discomfort or fear (tucked tail, moving away from an object or person, barking, or making herself as small as possible). Support your puppy and respect the choice she is making by allowing her to move away.
- If you have a puppy who is super social and just LOVES all other people and dogs, it is still important to limit the amount of interaction they have with other people and dogs. You want to avoid setting up the **precedent** that your growing puppy gets to interact with every dog or person they see and then matures into an adolescent or adult dog who drags you down the street to meet other dogs or people walking by.