

# Owner's Guide

## What is socialisation? (And what it's not!)

Having a new puppy is an exciting time! You know that you need to 'socialise' him or her so that he grows up to be a happy member of your family, but what does that really mean?



## What socialisation is not!

It is NOT:



A free-for-all with other dogs. Don't let him practise behaviours now that won't be appropriate later on.



Being over-whelmed by new people (even if they are being friendly!). Faces and hands coming too close can make some puppies defensive.



Being forced to cope with new experiences that your puppy can't handle. Hiding, shaking, barking and lunging are all signs that your puppy can't cope with the situation - pick him up and get him out of there!

## What socialisation (and if we're being technically correct... habituation) needs to include:



Learning that other dogs are nice to be around, but knowing that being with your owner is even better!



Choosing to approach new people to say hello, and being rewarded for calm behaviour



Learning to cope in the big wide world, and to ignore everyday sights and sounds, like traffic

# Top Tips



Little and often - getting your puppy out and about as much as possible is an excellent idea, but it's sensible to build his confidence in stages by starting with brief, gentle trips to places that are relatively quiet and then gradually increasing the level of noise and bustle that he needs to cope with.



All puppies are different - some are super-confident right from the start (these dogs often need to learn more control through training so they don't just rush up to other people or dogs outside) while others find new experiences worrying or even frightening.



It's essential that you give your puppy what he or she needs to be able to cope and enjoy being out and about with you. It's never appropriate to force a puppy to interact or to play if he doesn't want to.



Watch your puppy's responses - for example, if your puppy is approached by a new person to say hello, but he yawns and looks away, struggles to get away from you, hides behind your legs or tucks his head in the crook of your arm and hides his face, then he's saying that they are too close! Puppies that are shy need time, space and gradual encouragement to be able to build confidence with new people.



Use treats to reward your puppy for calm, confident behaviour when meeting and greeting new people and being in new places. This is not bribery, but helps to build good associations with these experiences, which last for life. If your puppy won't eat treats when you are out it is likely that he's experiencing stress - this is an indicator that you need to take introductions more slowly.



Meetings and greetings with other unknown dogs are best done calmly and quietly. Barking and growling from your puppy may indicate frustration, or may be an attempt to keep the other dog away because he or she is frightened. Telling your puppy off for this behaviour will only make matters worse. Instead, reward your puppy for good behaviour if you can, and intervene if you cannot. Seek help early from a trainer if you think your pup lacks confidence in any social situation.