



How to Socialise your Dog

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Did you know that socialisation helps reduce stress and anxiety in your dog? It also makes many other facets of their and your life easy, from vet visits to bonding, to their overall health. That's why it's important you regularly introduce your dog to other dogs and people from an early age, giving them time to play and interact.

But how's the best way to introduce your dog to new friends? While you can help your dog de-stress and reward good behaviour after the fact with a dog treat, there's more to it than just giving your dog positive reinforcement afterwards.

Here's how you should approach socialisation with puppies, adolescent dogs, seniors and rescue dogs:

Socialising Your Puppy

When it comes to raising a puppy, it can feel like a full-time job. You're being woken up multiple times every night, they don't do well being left alone, and they're fearful of new things, dogs and strangers. But it makes sense. Much of the world doesn't make sense to your puppy. They're like a baby, and they need guidance while moving through their new world.

The learning window for your dog needs to be addressed during their early life — from about one month of age to five months. Yet how do you properly train them during this time, helping them learn the ropes so they can socialise with ease?

Feeding Time

A simple way to work with your puppy on comfort around others is to see how they react while they're eating. A major issue for dogs is resource guarding - instances where your dog will either steal from others, or become incredibly defensive of the things that are theirs.

A simple way to work on this is to regularly approach them while they're eating (or playing with a new toy). For instance, if they're at their feeding bowl, walk up behind them as they eat and lightly pet them on the butt. Similarly, if they're chewing on a dog bone, try and reach out and take it from them, for a moment. If they react aggressively, act as if they hurt you. It might sound cruel, but it's a simple way to show them that they shouldn't hurt those who are nice to them - that they shouldn't bite the hand that feeds.

White Noise & more

Noise can be harmful to a puppy. It won't harm their hearing, but it's going to perturb them, causing discomfort that could lead to barking and reactivity. So take the time to get them used to the various things in your home and elsewhere. This includes the sound of music, your car, bicycles, skateboards, vacuum cleaners, washing machines, fans, and more.

Having Time Alone

Another key issue that extends to socialisation is ensuring your dog is okay being alone. The truth is that your dog is going to be alone throughout the day, particularly while you work. If your dog is not okay with it, they're going to



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Having Time Alone

get antsy, stressed, anxious and upset. This can all lead to the emergence of bad behaviours, such as acting out aggressively to other small slights. One of the simple ways to work on this is to work at crate training.

Crate training can be tough, especially with a puppy, but with patience it can make a big difference in your dog's life.

A good idea is to slowly get them used to their crate. It might not sound like much, but it's a simple way to teach them their crate is a safe space, not a place of discomfort. That time alone can, soon enough, become a place of comfort that will lead to better interactions with new people and dogs.

Keep Aggression at Bay

Similar to the issue of resource guarding, your dog might naturally be inclined to be aggressive to others, especially if they take them by surprise or invade their personal space. Help curtail this as soon as possible by working on positive reinforcement (and reminders). They act aggressively towards you? Act as if they hurt you. They snarl at another dog while out on a walk? Remove them from the situation until they calm down. Finally, start rewarding them when they act well. It will teach them there's a benefit to being calm around others. This is especially important once they start teething.

Handle them Regularly

You need to get them used to being touched and groomed by others, whether they be dogs or people. Throughout the day, take time to pet their head, ears, belly, paws, and back. These are minor ways to get them used to being touched. Eventually, they'll begin growing accustomed to it and will start welcoming it, seeing it as a sign of both comfort and love.

Socialising YOUR PUPPY

1. Approach them while they're eating
2. Get them used to the various sounds
3. Ensure your dog is okay being alone
4. Be sure to keep aggression at bay
5. Get them used to being touched



Socialising ADULT DOGS

1. Watch when you introduce your dog to others
2. Create social time for your dog
3. Remember it takes time and patience
4. Get your dog outside on a regular basis
5. Have friends come over with their dogs



Socialisation & your Adult Dog

Socialising an adolescent and adult dog is all about creating routines. Dogs do best when they have a routine to work from, as it provides them with a means to understand their day-to-day life.

What does this involve? It's a mixture of keeping them puppy-like and playful and giving them a routine they can understand, as well as regularly rewarding them for good behaviour, like handing them tricks.

Watching their Playtime

One of the best things you can do is just introduce your dogs to other people and dogs, watching their behaviour the entire time the interaction takes place. You'll want to make sure they're comfortable and aren't showing signs of aggression. However, if they are showing aggression, don't worry.



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That and barking are natural signs of discomfort in dogs. It doesn't mean they want to cause harm, they just are unsure about what's happening and want to keep themselves safe.

If you're worried about those around you, remove your dog from the situation until they calm down and then try again. It requires patience, but it's a worthwhile way to teach your dog.

Creating Social Time

Along with watching them while they play, you also need to create social time for your dog. This could be setting up a doggy playdate with a friend's or neighbour's dog or bringing your dog to the dog park. This time is for you and your dog to hang out with some other people. It's also a great time to let your dog socialise and watch their behaviour as they play. If they ever seem stressed or are getting a little snippy with other dogs, calmly call their name and take some time away from the pack to calm down.

Senior Dogs Still Like to Have Fun

They may say an old dog can't learn new tricks, but they can. It just takes time and patience. So don't feel overwhelmed if your dog ever seems uneasy or annoyed while trying to get them to meet new people and dogs. With some consideration, your senior dog can gradually get used to having fun with new people and dogs.

Frequent Walks Work

First off, make sure to get your dog outside on a regular basis. Similar to seniors and isolation, senior dogs that don't socialise enough can gradually get serious behavioural and health issues. They need mental stimulation as much as physical exercise.

Best of all, by taking them outside on walks, they're getting a mix of physical and mental activity. They'll also be able to say hello to passing dogs, people and outdoor animals.

Get to the Dog Park

Similarly, if your dog is up for it, it's a good idea to take them to the dog park. While they won't be able to play as gleefully as the other dogs around, especially the puppies, they're more than likely going to show signs of their age.

But if they still don't seem comfortable with that many dogs, slowly work up to it, which leads into your final means of senior socialisation.

Have Friends Over

Make sure to have friends come over too, along with their dogs, if they have them. It will get your dog used to having other people within their personal space. If they're not used to it, they're likely to get defensive. By regularly having others over to your place, you'll get your dog used to seeing new faces, especially in a place they consider to be their safety zone. That can help towards softening their reactions outside of the house too, as they'll be more comfortable having other dogs and people approach them.





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Socialising Rescue Dogs

Lastly, what do you do when socialising a rescue dog? One of the biggest problems while working on socialisation with a rescue dog is that they already have too many things they're trying to get used to. This ranges from new sounds, climbing stairs, walking on a leash, hearing and seeing cyclists, and more; especially if they were never raised in a home and are only accustomed to living in the wild.

What you're most likely going to see is behaviour indicative of discomfort and fear:

- Flattened ears
- Constant bodily licking
- Regular yawning
- Darting and hiding
- Whining
- A tucked tail
- And much more

You need to take your time. Don't rush your dog into situations where it's clear they're uncomfortable. If they're showing signs of discomfort, let up and give them space. You want to make sure they're comfortable with whatever it is you want them to do, rather than simply trying to force them into it. While a little pushing can be useful in uncomfortable situations, you should always try to take your time, never pushing them too hard.

Negative Experiences have their Impact

In addition to added fear and stress, your rescue dog might also show signs of aggression when interacting with new people and dogs. It's not a sign that they're naturally aggressive. It's just a sign that they've been abused in the past, whether in a home or in the wild, and that they're putting up a very strict guard. Signs to look for include:

- Lunging on leash
- Snarling and growling at others
- Grimacing at dogs walking nearby
- Excessive barking

If they're showing the above signs, you should move far slower than if they're showing apprehension. The problem with aggressive behaviour is that it can cause fear in other people and dogs. It could even lead to them getting bit, as well. Take your time and, most of all, consider seeking out professional help. A professional trainer will be able to work one-on-one with you and your dog, as well as in groups with other dogs and owners, to gradually take care of their behavioural issues.

Socialising **RESCUE DOGS**

1. **Don't rush your dog into uncomfortable situations**
2. **Keep socialisation encounters brief**
3. **Following every encounter, reward your dog**
4. **Slowly increase the amount of their exposure**
5. **Consider seeking out professional help**





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Socialising your Rescue effectively

Some simple tips to keep in mind, when it comes to socialising your dog, include:

- Keeping socialisation encounters brief, so your dog doesn't feel overwhelmed. Introduce them to another dog, let them sniff one another, give them positive reinforcement, and then move on.
- Similarly, always keep your interactions positive. Following every encounter, reward your dog, whether it be with praise or a treat. This gradually teaches them that they're doing something good by interacting positively with another dog or person.
- Work your way up to bigger fish. Not literally, but start your dog off with small, low-stress interactions and move up to larger encounters. For instance, don't start them off at the dog park. Instead, try to have one-on-one greetings with other dogs and people. This will be less overwhelming for them. Once they start getting used to that, you can begin increasing the amount of their exposure.

Wondering how to socialise your dog?

It all takes time. Don't rush it! Take it one step at a time. With preparation and patience, you can effectively socialise your dog until they become comfortable meeting new people and dogs.

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