

## **Socialisation for Puppies**



Whilst unvaccinated puppies are at a higher risk of contracting zoonotic disease such as distemper, hepatitis, and parvovirus, the risk must be mitigated as under-socialisation frequently leads to behavioural issues.

Puppies learn heavily during the socialisation period which occurs from birth until around 12 weeks of age. Your puppy is more likely to make positive associations during this time, as opposed to the fear period which begins at around 4-5 months of age. Unfortunately, puppies are frequently kept inside the home during the socialisation period and once their vaccinations are completed, enter the world during the fear period. This can cause a range of behavioural issues, including phobia disorders and fear-based aggression.

Behaviourally, it is best to socialize your puppy during the first 12 weeks of their life. To account for lack of vaccinations, be mindful of the environments that you are taking your puppy into. Playing with other dogs is just a small part of socialisation. Socialisation is repeated exposure to places and situations where stimuli such as smells, sights, and sounds are present.



Avoid coming into contact with unvaccinated dogs. Do not enter dog parks (this is never recommended for a dog of any age). Do not enter pet stores and vet surgeries unnecessarily. Do not walk on busy footpaths or visit parks that lots of other dogs frequent.

Instead, sit outside of a shopping centre with your puppy on your lap. Allow people to greet your puppy and encourage them to offer your puppy a treat or piece of dry food as this will assist with creating positive associations. When a car passes you, offer your puppy a treat. When a trolley passes you, offer your puppy a treat. Take your puppy to a quiet park and sit with them as they gnaw on a KONG, frozen bone or dehydrated chew. This will help your puppy to create calm associations. Repeat this at a quiet café, outside your local library, or at a friend's house. Your puppy will learn to tolerate lots of different stimuli within their socialisation period.

For safe socialisation with other vaccinated puppies, Positive Response offers socialisation sessions for all current Puppy (Part 1) clients.