



Socialisation checklist

In many owners' eyes socialisation means making 'doggy friends' by going to the park or beach and throwing their pup in at the deep end. They expect their puppy to mix happily with other dogs because they are dogs too. Would they push their toddlers into the park to play with other 'humans' in the same way without checking out their suitability? I don't think so. Of course puppies do need to have contact with other dogs but this interaction needs to be carefully managed to ensure confidence and good manners.

Equally, or even more important in some cases, is socialisation with a variety of people and situations. With many dogs this can be achieved at a fairly young age, but with the herding / guarding breeds this has to be continued regularly over a much longer period as the 'fear' stages seem to be more intense. Public attitudes to breeds can also be significant – most people will stop to talk to a cuddly Labrador pup of 5 months but will back off if a GSD pup of the same age has a woofing session at them. This can have a significant effect on a pup who finds out that it can make 'scary' people go away when it barks. Similarly a puppy that is used to attracting attention when small and cute may become frustrated when people start to walk on by as it gets older and less appealing. This can lead to lunging and barking, which then makes the owner annoyed and results in a dog that associates people with being told off.

Key point:

The goal of socialisation is that the puppy has positive experiences, not neutral or bad ones.

Here's a checklist that can help you make sure your pup sees and meets everything he needs so he can become a happy, well-adjusted family pet. Tick off each item as you meet them and score your dog's progress using the table below:

PROGRESS	SCORE	RESPONSE TO THE PERSON, OBJECT, ENVIRONMENT OR HANDLING
Needs Work	1	Overarousal: Growl, nip, bark, struggle (for handling), or lunge
	2	Avoid: Struggle, hide, try to get away, won't approach, or hesitant to approach
	3	Freeze: Holds still (but won't eat), non-exploratory, moving slowly or acting sleepy when they shouldn't be tired
Going well	4	Calm, relaxed, explores the object or environment, playful, with help of treat/food
	5	Calm, relaxed, explores the object or environment, playful, without treats/food

UNFAMILIAR DOGS	Met (tick)	Progress score
Dogs who play well		
Friendly adult dogs		
A dog who will reprimand puppies with appropriate force and restraint for getting into his personal space		
With puppies who play well and do not get overly aroused		
Black/brown dogs		
Yellow/white dogs		

NOISES	Met (tick)	Progress score
Thunder		
Fireworks		
Sirens		
Traffic		
Jackhammers/drills		
Heavy lorries		
Lawn mowers		
Any other noise that occurs in your neighbourhood eg farm machinery		

OTHER ANIMALS	Met (tick)	Progress score
Ducks and other poultry		
Livestock (cows, sheep, goats)		
Horses		
Cats		
Rabbits		
Any other pets in household		

IN THE HOUSE	Met (tick)	Progress score
Machines: vacuum cleaners, washing machines, dishwashers		
Pots and pans		
Rugs/blankets being shaken		
Brooms and brushes		
Rubbish bags and bins		
Alarms and doorbells		



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UNFAMILIAR PEOPLE	Met (tick)	Progress score
Adults (men and women)		
Elderly people		
People of different ethnicities		
Tall men/deep voiced men		
Loud, confident people		
Shy, timid people		
People behaving affectionately		
People wearing hats/hoods/crash helmets		
People with backpacks/bags/briefcases		
Disabled people		
People with canes/walking sticks/zimmer frames		
People with beards		
People wearing glasses		
Joggers		
Children (standing as well as playing)		
Toddlers (walking and squealing)		
Infants (crawling)		
Babies in prams/pushchairs		
Teenagers		

Try to let your pup experience anything he will meet commonly at least three times a week.

Try to meet all the things on this list before the pup is 16 weeks of age, or sooner if possible.

If you can't expose your puppy to common sounds frequently enough or at a level where he can have a positive experience, use sound CDs or free sound apps.

Feel free to add other things to the lists to suit you and your puppy!

SURFACES	Met (tick)	Progress score
Concrete		
Slippery /shiny floors (wood, lino, marble etc)		
Metal surfaces (manhole covers, grates, veterinary scales)		
Stairs		
Wet grass, mud		
Sand		
Ice, frost snow		
Pebbles, gravel		

TRAVEL	Met (tick)	Progress score
In a car		
On a bus/train if applicable		
Bicycles		
Cars		
Lorries/HGVs		
Buses		
Trains		
Motorbikes		
Tractors		
Other farm machinery		
Rollerbladers/skateboarders		

PLACES	Met (tick)	Progress score
Streets and roads		
A pedestrian area		
Unfamiliar houses		
Shops		
Kennels		
Park		
Beach		
Inside public buildings		