The Puppy Socialization Checklist

For your puppy's first three months



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Welcome to the most important time for your puppy's socialization: the first three months!

I'm Sandie Calloway, and I know that bringing a new puppy home is a whirlwind of joy, cuddles, and... a little bit of anxiety. You want to do everything right, especially when it comes to socialization. You've heard how critical it is, but what does it *actually* mean?

Positive socialization is about as many new experiences as your puppy can enjoy safely, without being overwhelmed. It's about creating **safe, positive, and happy experiences** with new sights, sounds, and friends. It's about building confidence, not creating fear.

This checklist is your roadmap. It's designed to guide you through this important window, and give your puppy a good start. Let's get started!

Warmly,
Sandie Calloway

The Golden Rules of Positive Socialization



1. Go at Your Puppy's Pace.

This is your puppy's journey. Never force them into a situation. If they seem hesitant or scared (tucking their tail, hiding, trying to run away), simply create more distance and let them observe from where they feel safe.

2. Keep it Short, Sweet, and Happy.

A short, happy exposure is worth more than a long, overwhelming one. End every experience on a high note with lots of praise and a favorite treat.

3. Positive Associations are Everything.

Bring high-value, pea-sized treats with you everywhere! You are teaching them a simple, powerful equation: **New Thing = Good Thing Happens to Me!**

The Checklist: The Most Important Window (the First Three Months)

Check off these experiences as you create positive, controlled exposures for your puppy. Remember the golden rules!

Ask your vet which places and dogs are safe for your puppy before vaccines are complete, and skip dog parks for now.



Sights & Objects

- [ ] Person wearing a large hat
- [ ] Person with a beard
- [ ] Person using an umbrella
- [ ] Children playing (from a distance)
- [ ] Person on a bicycle
- [ ] Mail carrier (from window)

Sounds (low volume!)

- [ ] Doorbell ringing
- [ ] Vacuum in another room
- [ ] Keys jingling
- [ ] Traffic noises (from a distance)

Surfaces & Textures

- [ ] Grass (dry and wet)
- [ ] Pavement / Concrete
- [ ] A clean cardboard box
- [ ] A shallow puddle

Experiences & Places

- [ ] A short, happy car ride
- [ ] Sitting on a quiet park bench
- [ ] A 'puppy party' with one calm dog
- [ ] Handling practice (touch paws/ears)

Sandie's Tips & Next Steps

What if My Puppy Seems Scared?

It's normal for puppies to be cautious! If your puppy shows signs of fear (cowering, tail tucked, ears back, trying to flee), **do not push them.**

1. **Increase Distance:** Immediately and calmly move further away from the scary thing until your puppy relaxes.
2. **Reward Calmness:** Once they are relaxed, give them a treat.
3. **Try Again Later:** Next time, start from that "safe" distance and slowly work your way closer over several sessions, always rewarding your puppy for calm behavior.

If your puppy stays fearful, ask your vet for help.

What's Next?

Socialization is a lifelong journey! This checklist is your foundation. Keep creating positive new experiences as your puppy grows.

For more in-depth, positive-reinforcement training guides on everything from potty training to leash walking, visit us at smarterpawsacademy.com!

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