

Socialization

Socialization is the process of becoming familiar with all kinds of animals, people, places, and things; as well as learning how to behave in society. All puppies need socialization regardless of breed, type, or temperament. Please do not take this for granted, regardless of your breed description. Even dogs from breeds that have a very good reputation for loving people will need to be thoroughly socialized as puppies, to make sure that they have lots of great experiences being around all kinds of different people. And more importantly, breeds that are known to be less social (often described as aloof) must be socialized to grow up to love to be around people in order to be good canine citizens.

It makes sense that a pup grows up meeting lots of people and going to lots of different places, and always having fun when it happens, he'll grow into an adult who loves to meet people and visit places. If a puppy is shielded from new experiences and people, though, he'll grow up to be timid and possibly frightened of new things. An under-socialized dog is more likely to react defensively around new people and in new situations and this is potentially dangerous. It is important to note that most bites occur because a dog is fearful and unsure, not because he is "dominant" or "protective".

So it's up to you to provide all kinds of new friends and experiences for your puppy. Luckily for you, this is lots of fun – infants of all species bring out the goodwill in everyone, and you'll find that people will line up to help you socialize your puppy!

For a list of socialization exercises please see the homework section of Dr. Ian Dunbar's book "After You Get Your Puppy" which can be purchased from the Open Paw Store.