

Socialisation In The New Home

With notes on how to cope with Social Distancing



Guide for New Puppy Owners [from 8 weeks...](#)

New Rescue Dog Owners...

Or The Owner of Any Dog in a New Home.

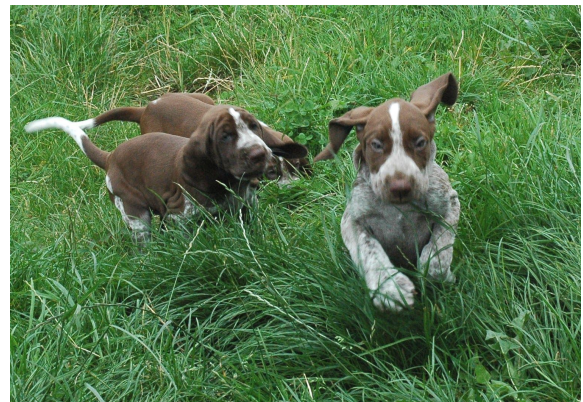
What is Socialisation.

“Socialisation is the process by which puppies learn to relate appropriately to people and other animals. It involves meeting and having pleasant encounters with as many adults, children, dogs and other animals as possible. It also involves becoming used to a wide range of events, environments and situations.”

<https://www.bluecross.org.uk/pet-advice/socialising-your-puppy>

The socialisation of your puppy would have begun with the breeder. It starts at around three weeks of age and continues until a pup is around 12 weeks old. After 12 weeks of age, your pup moves into a juvenile period where it still needs to be exposed to the outside world but it can take a more cautious approach to new situations.

The greater the exposure of your pup to sights, sounds, touch and taste as well as people, dogs and other organisms during the socialisation period, the more accepting your pup will be as it grows. As it moves into the juvenile stage, it continues to need to be exposed to the world around it. These interactions will mould your pup into the dog it will become.



It is now thought that social exposure should continue throughout a dog's life, as reminders or prompts to the brain to keep the social links in the brain going.

Dogs who have missed out on socialisation at the critical period of 3 to 12 weeks can still be social members of society, but more understanding and time will need to be given to each and every situation, object or interaction to teach the dog to accept the situation to be safe. This is because at around 14 weeks of age a dog naturally becomes more cautious of the world around it.

Understanding Canine Body Language

Before you start to socialise your pup it is really important to be able to read the basics of canine communication through body language. You must be able to identify when your pup is unhappy with a situation so that you can reduce the levels of stress in your pup.

All dogs are individuals, but some signs are common to all dogs as indicators of unhappiness. They may be scared, worried, anxious or terrified by a new situation or object. In order for your pet to be less stressed, you must identify all the signs of fear in all its

different forms. The main signs of stress are firstly lowered or folded back ear position. Secondly, the tail will be either in a low position between the legs or tucked under the body. Thirdly, the bodyweight will be shifted back towards the rear of the dog, it may be on its haunches, it may be sitting or lying down but the bodyweight will be away from the shoulders. Finally, there are a host of other signs that your dog is having a negative experience, the head position may be low, a dog may be licking its lips. The dog may be flicking its eyes towards you and then towards the object, the dog may even refuse to look at the object. Any of these signs mean that your dog is uncomfortable in the situation and you must react in order to reduce the dog's levels of stress.

For more information on reading body language signs please visit.

<https://animalfoundation.com/speak-how-to-read-a-dogs-body-language/>

<https://siberianhusky.com/dogs-language-knowing-more-about-dogs-behavior/>

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/lilita/9709045843/sizes//>

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/lilita/5652847156/sizes//>

The easiest way to reduce stress in a dog is to move the dog away from the object that the dog is showing fear signs towards. Moving away allows the dog to assess the situation at a safe distance. You can either carry on, walking past the object, or you can leave the dog where it is, and go forwards yourself, to show the dog you are not afraid of the object. This will help build some confidence in the dog. Finally, you could move the dog away and then forwards and away and forwards towards the article or object slowly and keep rewarding the dog as you do this so the dog knows the object is not to be feared. If the dog stops taking/eating the reward, the dog is going back into a fear state and you should move further away for a while.

Sometimes, dogs are fearful of an object one day and then the next day or a few days later, they show no fear at all. This usually happens through a process called habituation. Pups learn, through constant exposure, that nothing frightening happens while around the object is present so it is not to be feared. This is often noted with young pups and shadows or clouds passing overhead.

People Socialisation

It is important that the puppy is social with the people that it meets. In order for this to occur, the pup must meet a really wide range of people of all ages, ethnic groups, heights and weights. The more exposure the pup has to people the more it will learn different types of people are safe.



They also need people in different clothing and uniforms, different hairstyles, with beards, and a wide range of hats and helmets.



Important point:- pups should be “exposed to”, this does not mean touched by. They can meet people without being in physical contact with them. If the pup wants to greet the person, then, of course, this should be encouraged, but if the pup does not, then never force a pup to be touched by a person. If they feel uncomfortable, you must pick up on these signs and allow the pup to use your body as a refuge from the perceived danger.

Pups find comfort in hiding behind people, and this should not be stopped if the pup needs the support due to shyness of fear. If a pup has this place to seek refuge to, then it will start to build its confidence from there.

If the pup is barking then you should move the pup away until it stops barking, and the pup thinks the perceived danger is a safe distance away. It is important to discuss with your trainer any barking or other negative behaviour the pup displays.



During social distancing, you can still walk past a wide range of people. You can stop and chat at a suitable distance and the pup will gain much from these encounters. It might be also useful to play dressing up with your pup, start wearing hats in the house, or putting on the Santa beard you have stuffed in the cupboard or even the full



Santa outfit. You will have to be creative. If you cannot find children playing, you could use your TV to simulate children playing. This may work for some dogs. Keep a list of the types of people your pup has not had contact with, which you can use as a to-do list, as soon as the isolation rules are lifted.

Here is a quick ticklist of people that a pup should meet (it is not exhaustive)

White		People in hoods	
Mixed / Multiple ethnic group		People in helmets and hard hats	
Asian / Asian British		People in uniforms <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Police • Fire • Ambulance • High vis jackets • Overalls 	
Black / African / Caribbean / Black British		People with long hair	
Other ethnic groups eg Arab		People with short hair	
males		People with no hair	
females		People wearing wigs	
young people		People wearing masks	
children		People wearing halloween masks	
Mature adults		People carrying plastic bags	
People with walking difficulty		People carrying rucksacks	
People in wheelchairs		People wearing sunglasses	
People with beards		People wearing glasses	
People with moustaches		People who speak differently <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deaf • Sign language • Heavy accents 	
People in hats		Babies	

Ethnic groups taken from <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/ethnic-groups>

Canine Socialisation

In times of social isolation, it might seem difficult to do socialisation with other canines, but the face to face contact that is not currently possible to do is only a small part of canine socialisation.

In the first stage of canine socialisation, in the litter, the pup should have learned how to greet and play with siblings.

Our role is to expose the pup to a wide range of dogs, of all shapes and sizes, dogs of a wide range of temperaments and energy types.

A dog does not need to meet all the dogs and engage in a greeting. Passing each other on a walk goes a long way in understanding the variety of dogs. In fact, your dog should not meet every other dog it meets or it will think that the purpose of its walk is to meet dogs and it will not be as keen to stay with you. There are some dogs that you also want your dog not to meet due to their poor social skills or aggression towards other dogs.

This is a good time to practise getting your dog to sit and wait, while they are spoken to by a stranger and not approaching them. Learning to be steady while in social settings is a good skill for any pup to learn.

Your pup needs to meet the sounds of other dogs too, and learn about the range of barks, whines and other sounds dogs use to communicate.

It is best if the dog can see the animal making the noise so that it can interpret the body language which goes with the sounds and this will help explain the meaning in the noise.

PLAY

A pup should have learned to play with siblings in the nest, and then with its mother. This set of social skills is very important for a dog. Play is important for both mental and physical stimulation. However, playmates must be picked with care, if the other dog is too boisterous your pup may withdraw or if your pup is too boisterous for the other dog it may withdraw or become very assertive or even aggressive with the pup. Playmates should be well-matched with their level of exuberance and energy. This does not mean they are well-matched in size, big and small dogs can play well together and will accommodate each other's size.

Usually, I would suggest taking a young pup to the private garden of a known vaccinated dog of good temperament, to learn to play, before it is fully vaccinated. **However, in the current circumstances, this is not possible**

Unless you own another dog, you might find play difficult to do with social distancing. It could be possible, in an enclosed area in a park, but the dogs can still carry COVID 19 on their coats and skins so any such interaction would need to be followed by a thorough cleaning before you touch your dog's skin again. However, if you have to intervene you may need to break social distancing rules, and therefore it is not advisable to do so at this moment in time.

Surface (Touch) Socialisation

All pups will have been raised on one or more surfaces and therefore will be comfortable with that surface touching its feet. However, all dogs will meet a wide range of surfaces as they grow and need to be introduced to as many surfaces and textures as possible during socialisation.

It is also advisable to introduce the concept of a moving surface too. A pup will at some time in its life meet a loose paving stone, a loose floor tile or similar and this too needs planning for. A wobble board is a useful toy used by some breeders, but you can make your own wobbly surface by placing a plank over a broom shank or pipe, and the plank will tip. If you add several pipes underneath the plank, it will roll too. The pup can then explore this on its own or you can encourage it to touch the surface using treats. The older the pup is the more cautious it will be the first time so you will need to be very patient.

Below is a range of surfaces a pup could be introduced too. (This is not an exhaustive list) This can either be done on a walk or you can set out a path of different materials at home and encourage your pup to walk or play over them. As many of these surfaces as possible should be done before 12 weeks old but it is inevitable that not all surfaces can be met before the pup can go out in public.

- Grass
- Concrete
- Paving stones
- Pebbles
- Stones
- Cobbles
- Tarmac
- Ceramic tiles
- Linoleum
- Wood
- Laminate

- Carpet and underlay
- Sand
- Mud
- Water (river, stream, sea - water-hose in the garden)
- Sandpaper
- Bubblewrap
- Cardboard
- Fabrics, wool, silk, cotton, vet-bed, fleece
- Beanbag bedding that moves
- Shiny plastic (child plastic sandpit)
- Plastic bags (with supervision) and plastic sheets
- Children's playground rubber
- Dog show matting
- Metal food trays - baking trays

Sound Socialisation

Dogs must become accustomed to the sounds of the world around them. Much of this happens naturally as we busy ourselves around our homes or out on a walk. However, if you live in a quiet home or you have a dog that does not meet a great deal in its daily life then more sound support might be needed, to avoid a sound-sensitive dog.

All dogs will need some additional exposure to the less frequent sounds like fireworks and cars backfiring.

The breeder may have done some of this work for you and used a sound CD or similar to expose the pups to a range of sounds when they were still in the nest.

It does no harm to accustom your dog to a very wide range of human and natural sounds.

Dogs Trust, on their website, have sets of sounds that can be downloaded for free, along with their guide to sound desensitisation.

Other sounds can be downloaded from the internet and introduced at very low volume, usually while the dog is doing something that it enjoys such as eating or playing. The volume of the sound can be increased slowly over time as your dog becomes habituated to the sound.

<https://www.dogstrust.org.uk/help-advice/dog-behaviour-health/sound-therapy-for-pets>

<https://www.dogstrust.org.uk/help-advice/dog-behaviour-health/sounds%20scary%20booklet%20dogs%20trust.pdf>

<https://open.spotify.com/album/4poJuTsjg1r7l7QAUNnseh>

Sight Socialisation

A pup must be accustomed to seeing a wide range of everyday objects without fear.

However many walks out and trips you take you will not encounter everything, as this is an

impossible task. Therefore you must teach your pup to take your lead when encountering new and novel objects. Your pup must learn to trust your judgement, but at the same time, you must learn to read the signals your pup gives off in relation to such objects. You must be able to gauge the level of confidence your pup has in relation to the novel item and act responsibly.

If the pup is confident and approaches the object you can praise and reward the pup.

If it is cautious, then the approach you take will be determined by the level of fear the pup exhibits. If it is frozen in fear or is giving off a host of non-verbal or even verbal signals, then retreat to a safe distance and allow the pup to compose itself. Once composed, you must decide if you are going to walk away or attempt to go towards the object to get the pup closer or leave it for another day after the pup has had time to think about it.

If it worried but is only giving off a few signals you may wish to convince the pup that the object is safe by you, alone, going towards the object and touching it. This may help your pup to investigate. You can also walk in little circles, going away and coming towards the object slowly and praising the pup if it is coping. If not, go back to the last stage it was coping and try again at a later stage.

You can set this scenario at home by picking a novel object, which could be something simple like a serving spoon or a potato masher, a cooking pan, an open umbrella, a doll with moving parts, or just anything the dog has never seen before such as a large cone. Then you can show the dog the object is not scary by touching it or even holding it and then encouraging the dog to come closer, reward any forward motion, by throwing a treat and keep encouraging the pup until it gets to almost its limit. Then try playing around the object, again reward the pup for any forward motion. However also give the pup thinking time, a block of 10 seconds or so where it can think about the object and see if it will decide on its own to approach the object. You can also walk in little circles, going away and coming towards the object slowly and praising the pup if it is making progress.

An alternative approach is to take the pup out of a room and move the furniture around or add another piece of furniture to the room. Any change is a chance for the pup to analyse the situation and build its confidence.

Moving Object Socialisation

Moving objects, such as vehicles, are a minefield for pups and if not handled correctly it can cause some pups to display inappropriate behaviour, such as barking, chasing or stalking. When taking the pup out consider that moving objects are a barrage on the senses. Think of a bus driving past, the wheels spinning, the bus moving, People talking inside, the smell of the diesel and exhaust gases, the size of it, the sound of the engine and the air brakes being applied. Pups need time to process all this information and preferably within the safety of your arms when young or at a safe distance when a little older.

People often flood pups with traffic and many pups cope but others become wrecks, some release deep-rooted prey behaviour due to overstimulation. Moving objects must be treated as a very important part of training but one which must be taken carefully. Start at distance, and at a low level, do not pick a really busy road or a really quiet one where the peace is suddenly broken by a car going at 60mph. Again start low and slowly build up the stimulation to a level the pup can cope with. Very mild stress in a pup is okay, but high stress is not. Let

your pup gradually get used to traffic but teach it to keep an eye on you too, so that they do not start to hunt vehicles, bikes or cycles.

Some pups find travelling in the car very difficult. If your breeder has had the pups in the car for a few trips then you are ahead of the game. Make the first trips, to interesting and fun places, such as the park or beach (if close) and carry the pup around in your arms. If the car is just used to go to the vets and back for the first few weeks, it will not build a good association. Make the car a normal but fun place to be, even when it is stationary. Let the pup eat in the car, play in the car and make lots of short happy trips. Pups are often more happy travelling in a confined space, such as a crate. They feel safe in the enclosed space. **In lockdown, drive to the local park, so the pup knows you are going to a good place. Please do not leave the dog in a car on its own. Dogs die in hot cars every day.**

Pups must also be exposed to flapping objects such as flags and banners as well as carrier bags in trees. Banners on railings are now more common and pups must learn that the moment and sound is nothing to worry about.

And Finally

When in isolation or practising social distancing, you can alter and amend the ideas above to do a lot of socialisation, But there will be some aspects that you cannot do. Do not worry as an owner that your dog will never recover from this. There are many great KCAI trainers out there who will support you and use positive techniques to help you make up for lost time.

I would like to thank the many KCAI trainers who shared their advice freely to make this booklet possible.

I also thank those publishers who share their information freely on the internet.

<https://www.myfantasticfriend.com/2020/03/19/time-is-of-the-essence-puppy-socialization-during-a-pandemic/?fbclid=IwAR23w8ydF73xMeGC8utl8NgkYIn2FXBTvfv3NU14newGGbLrTaYTXrD4oU>

<https://www.bluecross.org.uk/pet-advice/socialising-your-puppy>

<https://olddogsnewtricksdogtraining.com/>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sumzxj0mxag&feature=youtu.be&fbclid=IwAR1uHSxxrFZMTFacAZzbLHaO3elxcNTUgF_FXYXSZUnSM0cBTFHQ1bmwBDg

Behaviour problems of the dog and cat Third edition, G Landsberg et al. 2013 Saunders Elsevier