

# WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING TO TEACH MY NEW PUPPY?

## **SOCIALISATION!**



Socialisation is creating purposeful positive experiences for your puppy to prepare them for life in the human world.

When they first bring home a new puppy, many people immediately focus on obedience. While obedience training is great and starting as early as possible will set your puppy up for success, it is NOT the most important part of raising a puppy. Contrary to the old saying, "You can't teach an old dog new tricks", there is no time limit for obedience training. You can teach a dog to 'sit' at 8 weeks old or 8 years old. The training will go easier if your puppy is learning right from the beginning, you can also train older dogs to the same level with just a bit more work and patience.

A lot of dog owners are not aware that there is a critical socialisation period window. There is a brief window of time where young puppies must be introduced to anything you would like them to cope well with as an adult. Depending on the puppy, the critical socialization window closes anywhere between 12 and 18 weeks of age. Undersocialised puppies will have behavioural problems. The severity will depend on the individual dog. Because there is such a limited window of opportunity for socialisation, it should always take priority over obedience training at this young age.

### **KEY POINTS TO KEEP IN MIND:**

1. Socialisation is not the same thing as exposure.

It is not enough to expose your puppy to lots of things. You must ensure they are having a positive experience.

2. You must let your puppy go at their own pace.

Forcing your puppy into situations before they are ready will negatively impact their experiences. Let your puppy explore the world in their own time. You can encourage them and reward them, but don't rush them.

3. If in doubt, add some space

Your puppy doesn't have to be right in the middle of something in order to have a positive socialisation experience. If you're ever worried that a situation may be too much for your puppy, add some distance.

4. The more socialisation, the better

Your puppy needs to have as many quality socialisation experiences as you can fit in before their critical socialisation window ends.

A well-structured puppy school will teach you how to set your dog up for behavioural wellness and coach you through the socialisation process.

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