

# PUPPY DEVELOPMENT & SOCIALIZATION

## The Rule of 7s

The Rule of Sevens is found in Brenda Aloff's book, Aggression in Dogs: Practical Management, Prevention & Behavior Modification.

Her point is that the majority of aggression cases she sees in dogs can be traced to a lack of adequate socialization in puppies.

The Rule of Sevens states that by the time your puppy is 7 weeks old, it should be exposed to the following situations:

- Been in 7 different, safe locations**
- Eaten from 7 different containers**
- Met at least 7 different people**
- Ridden at least 7 miles in a car**
- Been in a crate at least 7 times (more is better)**
- Played with 7 different kinds of toys**
- Been exposed to 7 different contexts**
- Been played with or taken somewhere alone, without mom or litter mates, 7 different times**

### Good breeders actively socialize their puppies

Most puppies are 8-10 weeks old before they are removed from the litter. At this point, the crucial puppy socialization period is well under way. It's very important for breeders to be proactive in socializing their litters to ensure that the pups will be confident, relaxed and good with other dogs, people and children. Ask a lot of questions before choosing a puppy from a breeder. What have they done to socialize the puppies? Is the mother of the pups good with other people and dogs?

**The critical socialization period continues for several weeks. During this time be very careful to expose your puppy to new situations. Take it slow and make sure it is a positive experience. Offer your puppy treats and monitor its reaction when exposing it to new situations. A well-socialized pup will be a better-behaved adult dog that will be easier and safer to handle.**

### DEVELOPMENTAL PERIODS

**3 - 7 weeks**      Canine Socialization  
 \*Learns species – specific behavior (what makes him a dog)  
 \*Learns to accept discipline from mother  
 \*Learns to relate to litter mates

**7 – 12 weeks**      Human Socialization  
 This is when the most learning occurs.  
**The greatest impact on future behavior will be made by any experiences that happen at this point.**

**8 - 11 weeks**      Fear Impact  
 Anything that frightens your puppy during this period will have a more lasting effect than if it occurs at any other time.

Properly socializing your dog is one of the most important things you can do!

## Socialization

1. Introduce your puppy to new and unusual sights.
2. Begin to introduce the pup to the new experience from a distance.
3. Gradually get closer to the stimuli. Continue to treat and encourage your pup.
4. Allow your pup the opportunity to investigate.
5. Whenever possible, ask new people that you meet to give your puppy a treat.
6. Take advantage of all opportunities, such as a passing cyclist.
7. End the experience with a big release or perhaps a game.

### Socialize your pup to Babies and children!

1. Children and puppies should never be left unattended.
2. If you do not know any kids, go out and find some for your puppy to meet.
3. Use treats to ensure the experience of meeting children is fun for your puppy.
4. Instruct the child on how to pet your puppy.
5. Be sure to introduce your puppy to children of all ages.

## Important Points

- Socialization means positively introducing your dog to people, places, animals, objects, sounds, and things so he is confident, relaxed, and calm in any situation.
- Socialization (also called desensitizing or counter-conditioning) involves exposing your dog to the life around him and eliminates any negative or adverse responses.
- The goal is to have your dog view all of these situations as non-threatening, thus **not reacting** in fear or aggression.

## OVERCOMING FEAR IN DOGS

It is important to expose your dog **EARLY** to various people and situations. The older a puppy/dog is, the longer it takes to get over his fears.

### Puppy's Age

3 months

5 months

8 months

### Time in Positive Training to get over Fear

1 Day

2 Months

1 Year or more

## Handling and Socializing

We want our pet dogs to be comfortable around dogs and people, and to be relaxed about handling and grooming, so that these things are not scary or unpleasant. Scared dogs bite, and scared dogs live a very stressful life. Please do not let your puppy grow up to be scared dog!

The time to get your puppy used to all of these things is **NOW!** After he is 3 months old, it will be much harder to get him to relax about things he might find scary. Do the handling activities listed below, making sure that he is introduced to new experiences gradually. Also make sure that he gets lots of praise and treats!

- Gently clean inside his ears with ear cleaner and gauze, tissue or cotton balls.
- Brush his coat – at first just a few strokes at a time. If he tries to chew the brush then keep his mouth busy with a stuffed chew toy while you brush him.
- Get him used to tooth-brushing, first by rubbing his gums with just your finger dipped in salt water (dogs like the taste), then using a finger toothbrush, and finally with a real toothbrush and doggie toothpaste.
- Get him used to having his mouth opened and examined by you, and pretend you are giving him a pill by touching the back of his tongue with your finger.
- Fiddle with his paws and nails, and then gradually introduce him to nail trims – at first clipping just one or two nails at a time. Make sure you know how to avoid cutting his nails too short – it will hurt him quite a bit if you cut the vein!
- Get him used to baths by putting him in the tub for treats: first with no water at all, then with a little puddle to play in. Eventually get him used to running water, being wet, and finally, being shampooed and rinsed.
- **Have lots of strangers pet and handle your puppy.** Make sure your puppy meets men and women of all ages, children, and people of various appearances & ethnicities. Ask people to stare at your puppy close up, give him tight cuddles, gently tug his tail, fiddle with his paws, play with his toes, grab him by the collar, lean over him and pick him up, and act goofy around him, so he even gets used to weird and whacky human behavior. Always make sure your pup is comfortable, and that he gets lots of praise and treats with each of these experiences.
- Expose your pup to whatever you want him to be comfortable with as an adult: car rides, busy sidewalks, noisy schoolyards, rowdy crowds, parties, other animals, sport games, traffic, elevator rides, stairwells, noisy appliances, etc.