

WELL PACED PUPPIES

When exposing puppies to new things...

Avoid a scared-y-pup!

POSITIVE

- Pay attention to body language for signs of fear (see our scared-y-pup infographic for fear behaviour identification)
- Encourage (but do not force) approach using positive reinforcement (e.g. offering treats, toys, praise).
- Remove puppy from situation if fear escalates and use desensitization and counter-conditioning to make it change their emotional state.

Right things, right time.

APPROPRIATE

- Early sensory stimulation starting when senses develop can be beneficial (tactile, olfactory at birth, visual at 2 weeks, auditory at 3 weeks).
- Sensitive period (3-12 weeks) is the optimal time for socialization to all possible social companions (e.g. humans, dogs, non-human animals)
- Exposure to novel people/places/things should continue throughout life.

Plan, prepare and track.

CONTROLLED

- Exposures should start slow, one at a time, at a distance, in a controlled environment and with a plan to avoid over-stimulation and minimize fear.
- Slowly increase complexity while going at the puppy's pace. (individuals have different thresholds for fear).
- Make desired behaviours easy/rewarding and undesired behaviours difficult/unrewarding.

Everywhere, everyone, everything!

EXTENSIVE

- Everything the puppy might encounter should be introduced during the sensitive period to minimize fear later in life including a variety of environments to reduce localization (attachment to a specific place), socialization with any social companions and habituation to all forms of sensory stimuli.
- Use a checklist (See our Puppy Socialization Checklist)

Help your puppy generalize!

DIVERSE

- Puppies don't generalize well as their learning is context and situational specific, any exposure in a different context or situation is perceived as novel. They need repeated exposure to subtle variations of the same theme.
- Build broad definitions of social companions, environments and stimuli so the puppy is not surprised with slight differences.
- New things should be introduced regularly throughout life to acclimatize the puppy to expect novelty and generalize safety.



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