



Checklist:

How to socialise your puppy

Most Australians treat their pets like a member of their family. And in return, our furry friends can boost our happiness, take the edge off loneliness, and even reduce our stress levels!¹

But there's more to pet ownership than your dog's home life. In order for them to be as happy and healthy as possible, you need to socialise them from a young age.

Here's our handy checklist to get you started.

SOCIALISING WITH OTHER DOGS

- ✔ Seek out friends and family members with dogs that have a calm temperament. And if you meet other dogs while out and about, always ask the owner first if you can let your puppy 'meet' them.
- ✔ Only introduce your puppy to one dog at a time. This will avoid any risk of them feeling overwhelmed by multiple animals at once.
- ✔ Have lots of treats on-hand.
- ✔ Give your puppy the freedom to control where they go – if you want to keep them on a lead, make sure it's long and loose so they don't fall into leash reactivity.²
- ✔ Don't punish your puppy if they don't want to investigate the other dog – you can try again another day.
- ✔ Reward your puppy if they take the initiative to approach other dogs in a calm manner.

SOCIALISATION VIA TOUCH

- ✔ Groom your puppy often so they get used to the sensation.
- ✔ Pat every part of their body, from their head to their paws and tail. Do this often so they are comfortable with all forms of touch.
- ✔ While dogs don't actually like human hugs, it's important to expose them to hugs as they are bound to receive one at some point in their lives, and you don't want them reacting badly to a child, for example.³
- ✔ Expose your puppy to having their food removed even when they are eating – this will avoid food reactivity and guarding behaviour.⁴
- ✔ Take your puppy into the vet regularly so they become used to getting touched by medical professionals. Even if you don't have an appointment, many vets will be happy to let your dog get used to the environment.

BUILDING TOLERANCE FOR SOUNDS

- ✔ Most dogs are sensitive to loud and unexpected noises, as they have exceptional hearing, so it's important they build up a tolerance.
- ✔ Leave your TV on or stream music from an app like Spotify when you aren't home to expose them to constant loud noises.
- ✔ If you are home and your dog reacts to a loud noise, use this as an opportunity – distract your puppy by playing a game or take them on a walk.
- ✔ Don't give your dog too much sympathy if they react poorly to a sound. This will, over time, make them associate that fear reaction with attention from you.⁵
- ✔ When you know there will be fireworks or thunderstorms, keep your dog in a safe area that muffles the loud noises. Keep them happy, calm and playing with their favourite toys.

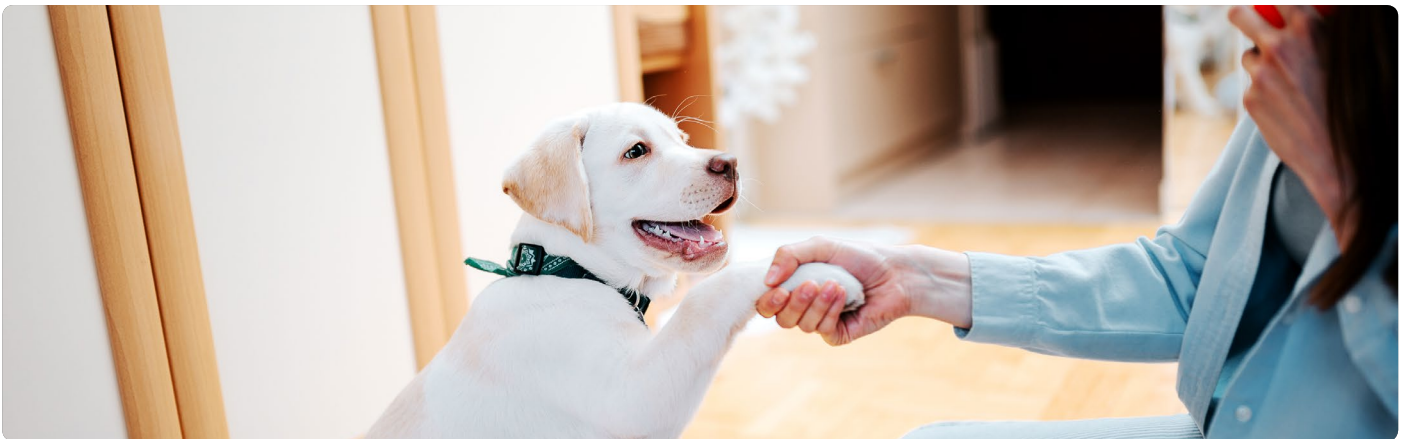


PREVENTING AGGRESSION AND BITING

- ✔ Puppies learn about how to behave around dogs from other dogs.
- ✔ Work on obedience training from a young age.
- ✔ Socialise your puppy as early as is reasonable so they are familiar with a variety of other dog breeds and personalities.
- ✔ Be aware of your dog's body language when around other dogs, and rectify any early instances of guarding behaviour or food aggression.
- ✔ When your puppy is young they will tend to 'gnaw' on your hands or clothing as an element of play. When they bite too hard, make a high-pitched yelp and say 'Ouch!' to let them know they've gone too far. If the biting continues, stop play time and distract them with something else.⁶

MEETING NEW PEOPLE

- ✔ Introduce your puppy to a variety of different people from an early age – not just your family.
- ✔ Take your puppy to pet-friendly cafes where other people may want to say hello and pat your dog.
- ✔ Explore parks, beaches and other public locations where there are lots of people, sounds and sights.
- ✔ Use each new interaction with a human as a training exercise for your puppy, incorporating 'sit' commands and diverting their attention (positive-reinforcement training) if they display any adverse reactions.⁷



ELIMINATING 'GUARDING' TENDENCIES

- ✔ Dogs display 'resource guarding' tendencies for a number of things: food, toys and even people – usually their owners.
- ✔ For toys and food, train your puppy with a command such as 'drop it' or 'give' while taking the item from them. When they release, reward your dog with praise.⁸
- ✔ For people, especially dogs with severe attachment issues to a single person, train the dog to be comfortable away from the human for extended periods. This may involve giving them a chew toy or long-lasting food item outside while the human stays out of sight.
- ✔ Socialisation with other humans and dogs is key to eliminating guarding behaviour.

BEING NEAR CARS AND TRAVELLING IN THEM

- ✔ Take your puppy on car trips from a young age.
- ✔ Always secure them in the car with either a seat restraint or car-appropriate leads that lock into secure straps.
- ✔ Praise your puppy on all trips, lavishing them with praise and occasionally giving them food treats.
- ✔ Expose your puppy to all sorts of trips, from short rides to the park – which will help them associate the car with a positive reward at the end – to long trips that may involve toilet stops along the way.

PUPPY PRESCHOOL

- ✔ Jump online and search for puppy preschools in your area.
- ✔ Ensure your puppy is the appropriate age for the class. (Many puppy schools have multiple classes for different age groups.)
- ✔ Sign up for the course and attend (usually once every week) for around 4–6 weeks, depending on the school.
- ✔ Your puppy will be exposed to new smells, sounds, sights, animals and potential 'triggers' such as skateboards, kites, loud noises and more.

Socialising your puppy is a great first step as a dog owner. But you can't always predict how life will play out for your puppy. The right [pet insurance](#) policy will cover your puppy against a variety of accidents and illnesses, which can keep you financially protected and give you greater peace of mind.

