

Socialization is how your animal learns to relate to people, other animals, places and things

- Socialization involves exposing your pet to new stimuli in a positive way. Sometimes this may need to be done in a step-wise fashion.

For example; handle the paws and positively reinforce, then touch the nail with the clipper and positively reinforce, then trim the nail a little and positively reinforce, until you can eventually trim the nails in conjunction with positive reinforcement

- Anything desirable can be used as a positive reinforcer: treats, praise, a walk, a toy, ...
- List of stimuli to consider
 - Mechanical: cars, trucks with trailers, bikes, skateboards, scooters, motorcycles, snow plows, garbage trucks, delivery trucks, lawn equipment, snow blowers, vacuums, etc
 - Environmental: walking in the rain/snow, holiday decorations, fireworks, thunderstorms, electronic noises, grass, gravel, cement, wood, mud, ice, wet grass, carpet, tile/slick flooring, crate, busy roads, crowded places, etc
 - People: people running, veterinarian, veterinary staff, package delivery workers, uniforms, teenagers, people with- canes, hats, helmets, umbrellas, sunglasses, beards, raincoats, walkers and erratic behavior, wheelchairs, different ethnicities, toddlers, women, men, sledding, etc
 - Animals: dogs, cats, birds, small mammals, etc
- Socialization leads to quicker learning, quicker brain development and maturity and less over reaction to stimuli
- Lack of socialization leads to fearfulness, anxiety, aggression, and antisocial behavior
- All dogs will benefit from basic obedience.
- All dogs should be enrolled in puppy classes at 8 weeks.

The benefits greatly outweigh the risks, but find a class that takes place in a clean environment, screens all puppies for disease, requires vaccinations to be up-to-date and requires deworming.

- Socialization needs to occur between 4-16 week, but can be continued up to 20 weeks and beyond. This is a period when their desire to socialize is greater than their fear.
- It is helpful to also socialize your kitten to things and people that will be a part of their life. Especially important are other cats, dogs, nail trimming, a carrier, car rides and the veterinarian's office. It is also very helpful to have as many people as possible handle your kitten as often as possible.