

canine questions

By Sharon Harvey

I've just adopted a puppy from our local shelter and they told me to make sure to socialize him. What does this mean and how do I do it?

A Socialization is a process that teaches your dog to be friendly with people and other animals and to be confident when confronted with noises and reasonable situations he might encounter when out in the world. Socializing your dog is the best way to make sure he's going to be a good and safe companion and to avoid future behavioral challenges. Before starting, if your puppy has not had all of his vaccinations, please contact your veterinarian for information on limiting his exposure to contagious diseases.

From day one, you need to gradually expose him to everything he's going to experience in life—everyday sounds, sights, smells, handling, strangers, car rides, and other animals.

The best place to start is at a puppy kindergarten class. Rescue Village just happens to offer a puppy class named, "Learn to Earn," that helps owners introduce their pups to the big world both inside and outside of their home. In class, your puppy will have the opportunity to meet new people, other puppies and visit a new place. But this is only the beginning.

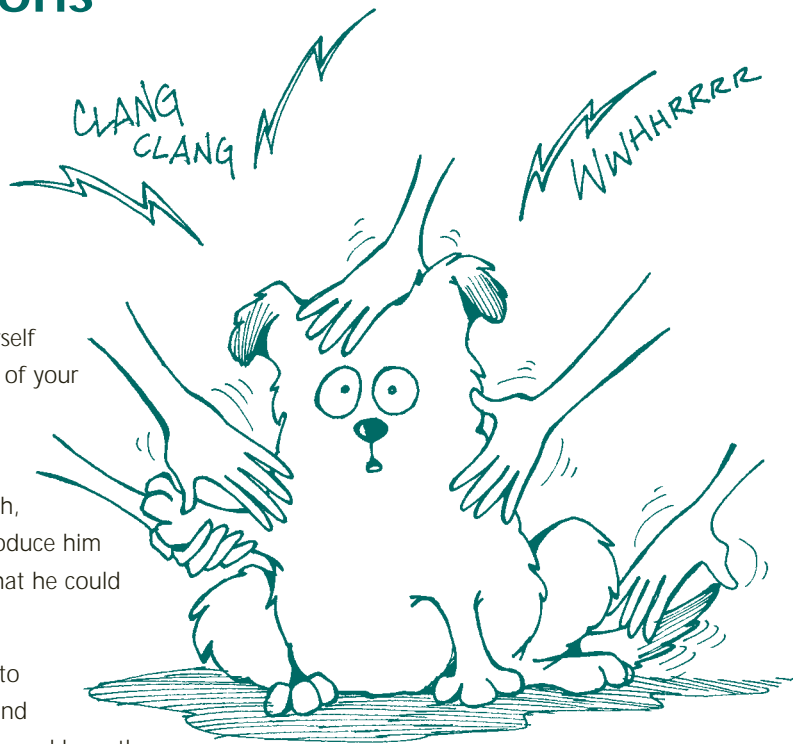
Outside of class, you will want to introduce your puppy to as many experiences as you can. Start around the house by exposing him to as many common household noises as possible. Run the vacuum, hammer nails, slam a door, honk your car horn, turn up the TV or radio, ask your children to squeal. Start slowly and make sure to offer him a yummy treat every time you introduce a new noise so he thinks noise is wonderful.

Gradually increase the volume or duration of the sounds and continue to reward him. It's generally recommended that you work on one noise at a time so you don't overwhelm

him or find yourself being voted out of your neighborhood!

Using the same gradual approach, continue to introduce him to new things that he could find scary.

- Introduce him to new people at and away from home and have them give him treats;
- Introduce him to men, women and children who are wearing hats, wearing eyeglasses, walking with canes, carrying bags, opening umbrellas and pair each experience with something yummy;
- Introduce him to other animals that you know are puppy-friendly and reward him for playing;
- Take him for rides in the car and reward him for being calm;
- Accustom him to handling by touching every part of his body and rewarding him for accepting it;
- Pat him and talk to him while he's eating and, every now and then, drop a yummier treat than his kibble into his bowl to teach him that it's good to have a human around his bowl;
- Reward him for trading his toys and chewies for a yummy treat;
- Take him to lots of different places and start all over again!



While this may sound exhausting, it's the best way to ensure that your pup will grow up to be a good canine citizen who's welcome wherever you go... that is, assuming you haven't lost all of your friends while desensitizing him to loud noises!

By the way, if you're interested in enrolling your pup in Rescue Village's **Learn to Earn** puppy class, please call 440.338.4819, ext. 20.

