

## **Puppy Socialization During Social Distancing, Online Training Resources, and Vet Appointments During COVID-19**

### **Socialization During Social Distancing**

- Socialization is a critical part of raising a puppy and is not something that can wait until the COVID-19 situation is resolved. The vital puppy socialization window is the first 16 weeks, so it is critical that adopters begin socializing their puppy immediately after adoption.
- That said, socialization is not the same thing as exposure. Socialization is best understood as introducing your puppy, in a controlled way, to a variety of new situations/stimulations (people, things, sounds, etc.), while simultaneously making sure he/she is calm and happy.
  - It is important to read your dog and take socialization at their pace. For example, if your puppy is nervous in new situations (like running the vacuum), you should move slowly and deliberately in terms of increasing intensity and duration so that they can learn to be confident and calm throughout the process.
  - [My Fantastic Friend](#) provides a great checklist of various aspects of puppy socialization that can be done while maintaining social distancing. Whether you are socializing puppies to surfaces, sounds, handling, etc., they provide a great variety of tips and tricks to teach these skills from home. And they correctly point out that puppies do not have to be in the middle of the dog park to get used to the sights and sounds of dogs and people at play and start associating them with positive treats.
  - You can even turn a checklist into a game. [The Social Puppy Games 2.0](#) is a fun way of keeping track as you build your puppy's confidence to new things (remember, as with all of these lists, to try a few at a time – you may have to spend more time helping your puppy learn to be confident in certain situations versus others).

### **Puppy Training Classes and Social Distancing**

- Some trainers like the [Animal Behavior Wellness Center](#) are offering puppy-only playtime where puppies are sanitized using veterinary-grade sanitizing wipes after entering the play area while their people wait outside as well as offering remote training classes to teach parents about their puppy's body language as well as virtual behavioral assessments. Read more about this approach [here](#).
- [Dog Trained DC](#) is offering a 4-week \$25 remote puppy club class to teach simple training exercises, share behavior tips, and enrichment activities that you can do from the comfort of your home. Another great positive reinforcement trainer with a plethora of free YouTube videos is [Zak George](#) and [Your Dog's Friend](#).

- Virtual workshops are also being offered by Your Dog's Friend (FREE -- click [HERE](#)), The Family Dog (click [HERE](#)) , Robin Bennett (click [HERE](#)), Spot on Dog Training (contact them [HERE](#) for more information), PackFit (click [HERE](#)), and DogTRAINED (click [HERE](#)).
- We always recommend reaching out to professionally certified trainers in your area with any questions – many of whose businesses are transitioning to virtual or online training and who would be happy to advise on any questions you may have.

### **Vet Visits and Social Distancing:**

- Veterinarians are also practicing social distancing and not all veterinarians are taking clients for wellness appointments at this time.
  - It is the responsibility of the adopter to find veterinarians that will give shots and conduct spay/neuter surgeries in a timely manner. DO NOT put off required medical vetting at this time – it is vital to raising a healthy puppy.
  - Many veterinary practices are practicing social distancing protocols (practicing door to door pickup and drop-off, having owners wait outside while the vet treats your pet, and calling the owner to discuss treatment and take payment remotely). For this reason, it is always best to call ahead to make appointments and confirm protocols for the specific veterinary practice of which you are a client.