



Puppy Socialisation: Why More Isn't Always Better

When we hear the word *socialisation*, most people picture puppies meeting lots of people and lots of other dogs. But true socialisation is actually far broader — and far more important — than simply saying hello to everyone they pass.

In fact, **over-socialisation is one of the most common problems we see in puppies today**, and it often creates the very issues owners were trying to prevent.

The Problem with Over-Socialisation

Many puppies are encouraged to interact with every dog and every person they see — often because their humans have been told, “*They need to meet 100 people before 12 weeks*” or “*Let them say hi so they learn to be friendly*”.

But this can backfire.

When a puppy learns that every dog or person = a chance to interact, several things can happen:

- They become **over-excited** whenever they spot someone new.
- They start to **pull, jump, bark, or whine** because they expect greetings.
- They struggle to walk calmly on a lead.
- They become frustrated when prevented from greeting, which can look like reactivity.
- They have difficulty settling in busy environments.

Instead of teaching “the world is safe”, we accidentally teach “the world is for me”.

So What Is Socialisation, Really?

True socialisation means **positive exposure to everyday life**, so your puppy learns that:

- things happen around them,
- they don't need to interact with everything,
- and the world is predictable, safe, and manageable.

It's less about *meeting* things and far more about *experiencing* them.



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Focus on Experiences, Not Interactions

Your puppy will benefit far more from calm, controlled exposure to the world around them, such as:

- different floor textures
- household noises
- traffic passing at a distance
- umbrellas, hats, children playing
- pushchairs, bikes, wheelchairs
- car journeys
- visiting new locations
- watching dogs and people *from a safe distance*

All of these help your puppy learn to stay relaxed and observe without feeling the need to rush in.

Why Controlled Social Contact Still Matters

Of course, puppies do need social *contact* too — but **quality is far more important than quantity**.

Look for:

- gentle, predictable dogs who won't overwhelm them
- one-to-one interactions over chaotic groups
- short, positive sessions rather than long, tiring ones
- supervised play where your puppy can pause and disengage

And remember: **your puppy does not need to greet every dog or person to be well-socialised.**



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What We Want Puppies to Learn

A well-socialised puppy should learn:

- The world around me is safe.
- Dogs and people can be around me without needing to interact.
- New experiences are normal and nothing to worry about.
- My human helps me feel confident and protected.
- Calm behaviour is rewarded.

This foundation creates a dog who is well-rounded, adaptable, and able to cope with the real world — not one who is constantly scanning for social opportunities.



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