

An Owner's Manual for:

PUPPY SOCIALIZATION

by the
AMERICAN KENNEL CLUB



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ABOUT THIS SERIES

At the AKC, we know better than anyone that your dog can't be treated like a car or an appliance, but we've named this series "An Owner's Manual" because sometimes you probably wish your lovable companions came with one.

These concise guides give you the tools, tips, and direction to be a responsible and confident dog owner who brings out the best in your dog. Give them a test drive!



WHAT IS SOCIALIZATION?

It's just what the word implies: Allowing your puppy to meet people and other animals. Ideally, socialization should begin as soon as you get your pup home—very carefully and gently at first, but steadily building up to such challenges as a houseful of guests or a trip to the dog park.



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WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

Owning a well-behaved, confident dog is more fun and less bother than owning an anxious, unruly one. It's as simple as that. Socializing a pup during his first year will help ensure that he grows into a good dog, one who can behave well around visitors and go out in public without being a nuisance. All it takes is some time and a little help from your friends.



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A NEW WAY OF THINKING

Years ago, it was thought that pups shouldn't be introduced to the world until they were done with all puppy vaccinations, at about 5 months old. But isolation often led to problem behaviors, like fear or aggression. Some isolated pups grew into adults who lacked social skills that enable dogs to read cues from their fellow canines.

Today it's widely acknowledged that isolation between 8 and 16 weeks old can contribute to or actually cause problem behaviors.



PARTY ANIMALS

Now, here's the good part: Socialization requires little actual work. It does take some thought and planning, much in the way you might organize a party. In fact, socialization sessions are referred to as “puppy parties” or “puppy socials.” The idea is to invite people and dogs to your home to interact with your pup in a relaxed but controlled setting.



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SOCIALIZATION TIPS

- Invite the right guests. For the earliest puppy parties, expose your pup to one or two calm, mild-mannered friends who can be trusted to gently handle and play with a puppy. As the weeks go by you can bring small children, boisterous adults, and larger groups into the pup's social circle.



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- This is vitally important. An adult dog meeting your puppy must have a calm demeanor and be current on all vaccinations. Both the visiting dog and the pup should be leashed at all times. Also, not every dog is OK around strange puppies. Choose your pup's grown-up playmates with great care.



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- Watch the clock. In the beginning, a puppy party should last about a half hour. Later they can stretch to an hour before the pup is put into his crate for a breather.



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- People = Food! Let your guests to give the pup small bits of his favorite treat. It's a great way to imprint the idea that being around people can be rewarding.



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- Socialization begins at home. A small pup feels more secure on his home turf. As he gets older, visit other homes and get him used to different sights and scents. From there your pup can graduate to visiting quiet public places, and finally busy public places like a school soccer match or a downtown shopping area.



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- It never really ends. After puppy socialization, continue to expose your dog to new faces and places throughout his life.



IN AN IMPERFECT WORLD ...

This manual assumes you've acquired a puppy at around 8 to 10 weeks old, when he's at his most impressionable. But life doesn't always work out that neatly. You might have acquired an older pup or an adult dog. This doesn't mean it is too late for socialization. Fearful, aggressive, or neurotic behaviors in social settings must be dealt with in all dogs. With an adult dog it's harder to do, but by no means impossible. In such situations, seek the guidance of an experienced trainer.



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WHO AND WHAT WE ARE:

The AKC is a not-for-profit organization and the largest purebred dog registry in the world. We are the sports-governing body for over 22,000 dog events a year, including conformation (dog shows) and exciting sports like agility, obedience, rally, tracking, lure coursing, earthdog, herding trials, among others.



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But the AKC is so much more! Here are just some of the ways we support and enrich the lives of dogs—purebreds and mixed-breeds alike—and their families. We:

- Created the [AKC Humane Fund](#), which supports breed rescue activities, assists shelters that permit domestic-abuse victims to bring their pets, and educates dog lovers about responsible dog ownership.
- Offer the [Canine Good Citizen®](#) program: A 10-step test that certifies dogs who have good manners at home and in their community. Over 725,000 dogs across the United States have become Canine Good Citizens, and 42 states have passed resolutions recognizing the program's merit and importance.
- Founded [AKC Reunite](#), which has brought more than 400,000 lost pets back together with their owners.
- Created the [AKC Canine Health Foundation](#), which funds research projects and clinical studies. Since 1995 the AKC has donated over \$24 million to the CHF. (The AKC is the only registry that incorporates health-screening results into its permanent dog records.)
- Conduct thousands of kennel inspections annually to monitor care and conditions at kennels across the country and ensure the integrity of the AKC registry.
- Offer the largest, most comprehensive set of DNA programs for parentage verification and genetic identity to ensure reliable registration records.
- Support one of the world's largest collections of dog-related fine art and artifacts at the [AKC Museum of the Dog](#), and we have the world's largest [dog library](#) at AKC headquarters in New York, both of which are open to the public.



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THANK YOU FOR READING!

We hope this information was valuable to you in helping your puppy live a long, healthy, happy life. Below, find additional books in our Owner's Manual series designed to strengthen the bond between you and your furry family member.



THE FIVE COMMANDS
EVERY DOG SHOULD
KNOW



CRATE TRAINING



PUPPY FOOD
& NUTRITION



PUPPY
SOCIALIZATION



WHY DOES MY DOG DO
THAT?



WHAT'S HE THINKING?



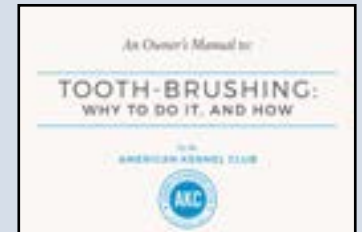
10 ESSENTIAL SKILLS:
CGC TEST ITEMS



FIVE TRICKS YOU'LL
WANT TO SHOW OFF



THE ALL-PURPOSE
GROOMING TOOL KIT



TOOTH-BRUSHING: WHY
TO DO IT, AND HOW



WHAT TO DO IF YOUR
PET GOES MISSING



WHAT ARE ALL THESE
VACCINES?