



## Puppy Home Schooling! – Socialization in the Closet

by  
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So you get it... *There's no such thing as over-socialization!* But what can you do when you aren't able to meet as many new people as you'd want or need to? When you're forced to stay indoors due to inclement weather or to even crazier realities, like a pandemic?! What then?? While puppies are ideally out and about, learning about their lifescapes – whether it be urban streets, suburban neighborhoods or rolling rural expanses – with the many people and animals with whom they will share their world, we still must do what we can to educate them in the absence of these opportunities. So let's have a *costume party!*

### ***Socialization to People***

People come in all shapes and sizes and this is something your puppy needs to know. So do as much socialization with unfamiliar people as you can; there's no better way to socialize a puppy than the old-fashioned way! For starters, many dogs can be a little more concerned about men because of their size, their deep voices, and their more abrupt movements. But if you don't have any men around who can help with this education, try to look taller (wear platform shoes), walk a little more stridently, speak in a lower voice, gesticulate with your hands... whatever you can do to use different mannerisms, whatever you can do to not look like you!

Human attire can also make people look very different, and this you have immediately available to you, without the participation of strangers. Just plunder your coat closet for overcoats and puffy winter parkas, canes and crutches and umbrellas. Put on different silly hats, masks and sunglasses (which tend to look like unblinking eyes). Dress in austere all-black, which can approximate a uniform as might be worn by a policeman or mail carrier. Gentlemen, take a few days off from shaving and let your puppy see facial hair. Do you have a clunky toolbelt on your workbench or big heavy boots? Even luggage, grocery bags, and wheeled objects like skateboards and bikes can make a human look different in a dog's eyes. So be creative!

And above all, *be patient – let your pup approach each new person or costume at her own pace.* Some costumes may be so convincing that she might not recognize you as her human so, if she shows shyness, take it slow. Perhaps remove pieces of the costume until she's more comfortable, let her sniff and investigate the items that worry her, then put them back on in her presence. And, of course, make this all fun! Treats and toys, fun and games!



*Samantha*

### ***Socialization to Dogs***

There is no replacement for socialization with other puppies and dogs. So much is learned in these interactions – play etiquette, tolerance and respect for other players, dog body language and cut-off signals and, last but not least, bite inhibition. Puppies who do not get enough of these interactions tend to have intra-dog issues later in life and may also tend to be mouthier, and have harder mouths, with their human playmates. So finding some outlets for appropriate dog play are essential and cannot be delayed.

### ***The Lesson***

There's no going back to these early weeks. Once your pup's book is written, you can only overlay it with new experiences, but these core, underlying chapters will always remain. So for your puppy to learn to *love* her lifescape is her most important lesson. The rest will come in good time!

#### *Socialization Hints At A Glance:*

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <u>people &amp; kids in/with</u> skateboards/skates, limping, uniforms, hats, walkers, wheelchairs, overcoats, facial hair, sunglasses, umbrellas, bicycle, stroller, live musicians, broom/mop, balloon, elderly, luggage, remote control toys, ...	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <u>animals:</u> other dogs, cats, birds, barnyard animals, ...
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <u>sounds:</u> applause, coffee grinder, blender, doorbell, vacuum cleaner, TV, washer/dryer/dish washer, whistle, fireworks*, thunder*, boom box, siren, traffic, lawn mower, motorcycle, zipper, gunshot#, hairdryer, toilet flush, ...	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <u>handling:</u> ears, paws, tail, mouth, hands over head, ...
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <u>environment:</u> rain, sudden movements, beach, forest, vet office, fountain, hose, hardware store, pet store, outdoor mall, mirror, ...
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <u>riding in:</u> car, boat#, shopping cart, elevator, automatic door, skateboard...
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <u>surfaces:</u> linoleum, carpet, wood, wooden dock, stairs, slick surfaces, metal grate, ...
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <u>equipment:</u> grooming equipment (brush, nail clipper, dryer#), toothbrush, ...
* use sound effects CD	# if applicable