

## How Do I Socialize My New Dog?

by Laura Van Arendonk Baugh CPDT-KA KPACTP

Whether it's a new puppy or a newly adopted adult dog, many new pet owners want to immediately start showing off their new dog, and with justifiable pride. But sometimes their approach can make the transition more difficult than it needs to be.

The dog park is a common early destination, but for many dogs, this is the equivalent of bringing home a new child and promptly taking him clubbing! Dog parks can be very intense and very intimidating, and while there are many dogs who enjoy them, it's certainly not universal even for dogs who are well established in their homes. For a dog in a new home, still trying to work out who everyone is and if he'll stay there for long, the intensity of a dog park may be overwhelming and could foster some uncertainty or defensiveness.

Instead, take your dog on frequent walks around the neighborhood, letting him experience the sights, smells, and noises of his new digs. He can meet the neighbors (he should be allowed to approach them, rather than the other way around) and get some pats and treats.

Socialize with other dogs with care; many dogs have not learned how to politely greet other dogs, or how to do so on leash. Dragging or pulling toward another dog can be very rude body language and can prompt a justified angry response! If your dog is overly excited and is eliciting growls from other dogs, talk to a trainer about teaching him to calm himself (this is different from correcting his pushy behavior, which can create anxiety or more frantic behavior around other dogs).

When greeting new people, your dog should get to choose his approach. If he seems reluctant, have the person turn slightly away; most humans naturally bend forward toward a dog, but that can be visually intimidating from the dog's eye level! If he continues to seem reluctant in several situations, consult with a certified trainer.

Finally, Enroll in a positive training class as a socializing and bonding experience! Good training will build the dog's confidence and desire to work with you while giving him more skills with which to interact positively with his world, and training and relationship are tightly interwoven. You can't train properly without strengthening your dog's enthusiasm and trust and any class which doesn't seem to foster this is one to be wary of. To find a Certified Professional Dog Trainer (CPDT) in your area go to [www.ccpdt.com](http://www.ccpdt.com)