
GREETINGS AND SOCIALIZATION

Definitions:

1. **Socialization:** Socialization has two definitions
 - a) To talk to and do things with other people (or dogs) in a friendly way
 - b) To teach (someone) to behave in a way that is acceptable to society
2. **Exposure:** experience of something, typically associated with inanimate objects, to reduce fear and suspicion, so the dog becomes more accepting of its environment
3. **Greetings:** to meet, specifically when a person approaches and engages with your pup by petting.

Overview

Greetings and solicitous behaviors are a struggle with assistance dogs in public. Our dogs have been bred to enjoy and cooperate with people. We have breeding host homes that create a positive first association for pup with people. Most of our dogs are very interested in people, so they don't need very many sessions of free petting with strangers.

While the vast majority of pups are friendly, we also need to teach them to be polite. Many young dogs are eager to interact with strangers. Part of socialization is becoming friendly and accepting but a more important aspect to Assistance Dog work is learning how to behave acceptably in public and at home. Behaving acceptably is keeping all 4 feet on the ground, remaining calm during the approach, and not mouthing or grabbing at a new acquaintance's hand or clothes. There are two main concepts we can apply to help this process.

1. Reduce socialization and public access trips.

Pup surely needs socialization but some pups don't need as much as others. If your pup likes people and shows little apprehension, then it needs exposure more than socialization. This pup needs a few people to work with him so he learns how to greet strangers, but he doesn't need to interact with every person who thinks he is cute.

If pup doesn't like people and is apprehensive, then you need to call PAWS. What does apprehension look like? Does pup pin back his ears and submit to everyone? Does pup submissively roll when anyone touches him, pull toward people and lean on them? This pup needs some confidence exercises and should not practice behaviors that further reinforce the lack of confidence.

2. Teach pup how to get access to people.

Our dogs can get themselves into trouble because they pull to get to people. This is all about self-control and is very similar to these other exercises:

- A. How does pup get out of an exercise pen or crate? By being quiet and still, then later by offering a sit or down.
- B. How does pup get access to food? By waiting patiently for permission.
- C. How does pup earn an opportunity to get in or out of a car or a building? By waiting patiently for permission.

In summary, every individual pup has different needs for socialization, outings and exposure. We will begin tailoring the exercises to the unique needs of the pups by reading their body language and adjusting exercises to better address their development. The next exercise, Greeting Control, is described in the fundamental Remaining in Place.