



PUBLIC OUTINGS

Goal

The goal of practicing out in public with your foster puppy is so they can learn how to behave and act in a public setting to help prepare them for their future career as an assistance dog. Going out in public is a big deal for a puppy, as it can be a lot of new experiences for them all at once, so we want to ensure both you and your foster puppy are set up for success!

Introduction

It's important to wait to do public outings until your foster puppy matures enough to be able to handle going out in public and has had time to build a relationship of trust with you, as well as having a solid foundation of obedience and loose leash walking skills for them to be able to function well in new environments. Each puppy learns, develops, and matures differently, so if that means that your first public outing is when your foster puppy is 10 months old, that's perfectly fine!

When it comes to public outings, quality is much more important than quantity! A positive and low stress public outing for 10 minutes in a library is a much better learning experience than going to the busy grocery store for an hour that's overwhelming and stressful for your puppy. If your foster puppy is too overwhelmed to be able to function in a public space, remove them from the situation as soon as possible and practice some obedience skills at home before trying again elsewhere.

For your first few outings with your foster puppy, keep them very brief, positive, and rewarding for the puppy. These first outings should be in very low-distraction environments, such as an empty parking lot, or a quiet corner in a library. The more sights, smells, and people, the more distracting it will be for your foster puppy. Keep these first outings no longer than 20 minutes at most.



Introducing Public Access

Before going anywhere outside of your house and yard with the puppy, be sure they have a good grasp of manners, loose leash walking, and obedience skills. To help prepare them, give them gradual exposures outside of the home to increase their confidence in new places.

For your first few outings with your foster puppy, keep them very brief, positive, and rewarding for the puppy. These first outings should be in very low-distraction environments, such as an empty parking lot, or a quiet corner in a library. The more sights, smells, and people there are, the more distracting it will be for your foster puppy. Keep these first outings no longer than 15-20 minutes at most.

First public outing tips:

- 🐾 Practice putting on and wearing the cape at home prior to going out. Make it fun for them, have them wear it intermittently while doing things like eating or playing.
- 🐾 Have high value treats mixed in with their kibble or normal treats. Things like cheese or hot dogs work really well for keeping your foster puppy's attention on you.
- 🐾 Practice easy things with the puppy, such as calling their name, or practicing eye contact when in a new place. By doing things that they know well, they'll have more opportunities to be successful and be rewarded, which helps make it enjoyable for them.
- 🐾 Feel free to stay put. Staying in one spot with your foster puppy helps limit exposure to too many new distractions at once.
- 🐾 Have an emergency lure on hand: Keep a treat that is very valuable to your foster puppy that you can use to lure them out of a situation if something doesn't go as planned.

When it's Time to Leave

How to tell if your foster puppy is not having a positive and productive time on an outing and signs to look for from your puppy that tell you that you need to leave:

- 🐾 Not taking treats as eagerly or at all
- 🐾 Not listening to cues they know
- 🐾 Excessive pulling on leash/lunging



- ❃ Excessive panting
- ❃ Whining or barking
- ❃ Shutting down, or refusing to move with you
- ❃ Frequent fearful reactions, tail tucked under them

If you aren't having a good time, chances are your foster puppy isn't either, so that can also be an indication that you should leave and try again another time.

Rules For Public Outings

- ❃ No public outings until the puppy is at least 16 weeks old and has had their final round of puppy vaccines. This helps ensure they are safe from any potential diseases they could be exposed to and also gives you time to build a relationship and practice obedience skills with your foster puppy.
- ❃ Always be focused on your foster puppy, what they are doing, and how they are feeling. Anytime you bring them anywhere, your foster puppy's state should be your first priority. If you won't be able to focus on them, leave them at home this time!
- ❃ Your foster puppy must maintain good behavior in public. When in public with the puppy, you are representing both PAWS, and all assistance dogs in training. If your foster puppy is being naughty, causing a commotion, or is being a disturbance, please end the outing as soon as possible.
- ❃ No petting from other people. They need to learn good habits and be able to ignore strangers in public. We don't want them to think that everyone will pet them, as it causes people to be much more distracting to them. Sometimes people may not understand why they can't pet your foster puppy, be sure to explain how it is important for their future career!
- ❃ No escalators. Escalators are unsafe for dogs due to the risk of pinching their feet. Opt for the elevator or stairs instead.
- ❃ Always carry a clean-up kit in case of an accident. No matter the age of your foster puppy, it is always a good idea to bring poop bags, a rag or paper towels, and disinfectant spray along on your outing just in case!



Have Questions or Need Help?

If you feel like you're struggling with public outings, contact your local puppy club leader, a mentor, or the foster puppy team at PAWS (fosterpuppy@pawswithacause.org).

We can help you!