

Canine Socialisation Part 3: Adult Dogs (18 months +)



Behaviour. It's one of the foremost reasons why a dog is surrendered to RSPCA ACT.

If for some reason or another you were unable to socialise your dog while it was young, you may need to use different techniques to what you'd use for a puppy to help them learn and be at ease with the greater world.

I've asked our behavioural dog trainers to provide some good advice for those of you that could use some tips for socialising your adult dogs, and this is what they shared with me:

While puppies can be allowed to interact with each other without too many concerns, adult dogs typically do not enjoy playing with large groups of unfamiliar dogs. Imagine been thrown into a completely foreign environment with people who all speak different languages and have strange customs. Very few people would say that they'd instantly feel comfortable in that situation!

The same applies to your dog. You'd feel better if there was a person you trusted to help guide you through that difficult situation, wouldn't you. Building a healthy foundation of trust with your dog is important and the first incremental step in socialisation. That's why it's important to first bond and developed trust with your dog prior to introducing them to new things.

Make sure you have realistic expectations. For instance, taking them straight to a dog park or community event is the equivalent to asking you to take a test on an unknown subject matter without warning. Instead, slowly introduce them to new people. Start by having the stranger stand sideways in a non-threatening way. Be sure your helpers understand to stay still and quiet and to move slowly.

Give your dog a way out of a situation if they feel uncomfortable or threatened. Take notice if the dog keeps using its safe place. If so, they're probably not ready for that activity yet! Start on something easier and work up to it.

Don't get angry if they growl! Growling is a form of communication, and it is your dog's way of telling you they're upset or uncomfortable with the situation. Instead of forcing them to stay – take them away from what's upsetting them. Try to find the cause of the growling and note that stimuli as something to work on in the future.

Remember that all dogs are individuals with different needs. Watch them closely and take cues from their behaviour. Be careful of becoming overenthusiastic while training/socialising. Pushing too hard for too long may stress your dog and undo some of the work you've already done. Know when to back off and give them a break as learning about the world can be exhausting for your furry pal!

RSPCA ACT SENIOR BEHAVIOURAL TRAINER SHARI'S TOP TIP:

"You should take as many opportunities as you can to get your dog out and about and show them all the wonderful things in the world. Tune in with your dog. Ditch the headphones and Smartphone and enjoy your walks. Let your dog sniff and explore. Enrol yourself and your dog in a quality training classes – just for fun. Put your dog in the car and go to the other side of town and walk, walk, walk!"

Need more help? Contact our staff regarding Dog Training School on 02 6287 8100.

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