



# Socialization Checklist

Taken from the Good Owners-RCOC [Primer on Responsible Canine Ownership](#), Chapter 1-2: Socialization Basics

## CONTEXT

As discussed in [Chapter 1-2 of the RCO Primer](#), early, repeated, properly-conducted, and broad socialization with unfamiliar people, places, and things is critical for healthy puppy development. Well conducted socialization not only makes your puppy comfortable with a wider range of specific experiences and stimuli, it also improves her more general resilience, adaptability, and confidence. See the RCO Primer for further discussion of some of the pitfalls and basic principles of 'well conducted' socialization are. An important part of that is **breadth** - making sure that you expose your puppy to as close as possible to the full range of stimuli she's likely to experience in her life. To help you achieve that, we've created this printable checklist of stimuli to socialize with.

## CHECKLIST

**NOTE: TECHNIQUE MATTERS! Improperly-conducted socialization is worse than no socialization at all.** Be sure to learn proper socialization technique from a professional trainer, such as you can find by taking a Basic Obedience course at your local Rescue or Adoption Center. To better understand what 'proper socialization' looks like, see Chapters 1-2, 1-3, 1-4, and 1-5 in the [Primer on Responsible Canine Ownership](#).

### *People*

- Men
- Women
- Children, of various ages
- People of different skin tones
- Taller people
- Shorter people
- People wearing hats (can be you)
- People wearing sunglasses
- People with facial hair
- People wearing hoodies (can be you)
- People wearing big jackets (can be you)
- People carrying walking sticks (the third 'limb' can surprise a lot of dogs)
- Strollers
- People with canes
- People in wheelchairs
- Bicycles and people on bicycles
- Greeting strangers, having strangers approach them and interact with them (this is an important one, but requires some finesse -

see [Chapter 1-3: Socialization with & reactivity to strangers](#) for details)

- Strangers walking in front of your house
- Unfamiliar people walking in your yard
- Unfamiliar people coming into your house

### *Dogs and animals*

- Other dogs, of different sizes (especially large dogs), genders, breeds, ages, intact/neutered, and demeanors (see RCO Primer [Chapter 1-4](#) for how to do this appropriately)
- Horses, in different scenarios (trails, farms)
- Chickens
- Livestock

### *Places and weather*

- City traffic
- Crowded places
- Stores (many stores allow dogs; will likely require some obedience training first)
- Parking lots
- Malls
- Children's sports games

- Restaurant patios (will likely require some obedience training first)
- Other peoples' homes
- Fountains
- Boats
- On busses
- On trains
- In the car
- The ocean
- Rain
- Snow
- Strong winds
- Beaches
- Woods
- Gravel

- Hotels
- Apartment Buildings
- Any other natural ecosystems you're likely to hike in
- Different Surfaces, like grass, pavement, turf, grates, etc. (see [Chapter 1-5: Environmental Socialization](#) for why and what we mean)

### ***Objects***

- Fireworks
- Lawnmowers
- Vacuum cleaners
- Robot vacuums
- Television
- Loud children's toys
- Musical instruments

**This is not a complete list!** It's just a starting point to get your thinking going. Talk to your trainer, read some books and resources on socialization, and brainstorm more stimuli to explore!