

My ideas on raising up and socialize puppies

Preparing for life

When my puppies open their eyes they move from their puppy room and box to my kitchen, at the beginning only for some hours, the more they grow the longer they can stay there. Only at night they go back to their puppy room.

Having them in the kitchen gives them the chance to get introduced to many many noises and all the things that belong to daily life: the Hoover, the TV, noises of dinnerware (I don't want my puppies to be afraid of a toaster when they are grown up ;-)), roller blinds and so on. When they are about 3 - 4 weeks they meet my visitors and can play with them. I ask all my family and friends to come (usually I never need to ask twice), also with their children, and I sometimes beg them to wear hats or long coats. One friend is invited to come in his motorbike clothing and with the helmet on his head. To see this extraterrestrial person is usually very impressive for the puppies.

When they start to turn into very active little fellows the door to the wintergarden is always open and they can leave the kitchen if they like, and this gives them the possibility to pee and poo outside. We built a special ramp as a "bridge" between wintergarden and garden to avoid that the puppies have to run the stairs up and down. This ramp is one of the puppies' first big challenges. They are curious and watch their mother going it up and down, and it does not take long until they cautiously start to follow her.

It's important for me that they early learn to move on different grounds: the wooden ramp, gravel, tar ground, grass, sand, plastic tarps and shaky ramps in the garden. I find it very interesting to see which of them is the first to "enter" the grass when they only moved on the kitchenfloor up to this point. I also want them to become acquainted with all kinds of weather, snow, big storm and thunder storm, and I am happy when they can experience this together with her mum as a normal fact, and also darkness. This may sound trivial but I know a 7-month-old dog, raised up in a flat, who was never taken outside when it was dark – can you imagine how he reacts when he is confronted with darkness today? This shows how little 'normality' can be 'normal'!

Outside they can help me with gardening, so they are well prepared for their later education as gardening engineers! They get to know a hand barrow as a very normal thing and make fun out of it when I use it. Sometimes I put stones into it which causes real loud noises. The puppies are deeply impressed when they hear that for the first time, and I am satisfied when they stop to react on this afterwards.

Next steps are to show them "outside life". I start to have them in front of the house for some hours so they see and hear cars and motorbikes for the first time, see joggers, sometimes cats, other dogs, horse-drawn carriages, kids with their skate-boards. The first time they sit there – safely behind the fence – as if they were watching puppy TV, magnetized looking at all the new things happening on the street. Sometimes I have them together with their Mom, sometimes they are separated. E.g. I don't want them to learn from their mother how to be as angry as possible with Mr. Postman.

At the time of 7 - 8 weeks I again ask my friends to come (having a litter is a very easy way to make friends and family happy) and help me to take the little gang for a very short walk in front of the house. This is very exciting for them, and together with mommy no problem. So they also do their first steps being on a leash. Was this successful we try again later without mom.

Another very important thing is the car. At the age of 6 - 7 weeks they slowly get used to being in the rear of it, together with mom. After their play-time this is very easy, they can have some sleep there, or I let them search for little treats in the rear. Getting used to this we start our first trips, everytime I have to go somewhere I take them all with me in the car. So they have practised this several times before they leave to their new homes.

These trips give them a chance to look at new things again. We go to the city, I open the rear trunk and they can look at everything outside. They watch and hear all the cars and trucks with their very loud noises on the industry street.

Other things we do are little exercises in being touched, getting their ears cleaned and their teeth and temperature checked, exercise some posing for the show from time to time. I have a dog shower in the puppy room, and sometimes, just as an exercise, they are sprinkled on feet and legs and then dried with a towel. As an insistent owner of carpets who never gives up to combine carpets and dogs, it is important to me that they learn to have their feet cleaned after a walk in rain season, best before they come in.....

What else? Of course I cannot control them 24 hours a day but I try to avoid fighting. They can play and they can test their sisters and brothers but I intervene if they go too far and start to get angry and too wild.

With my own puppy I go to puppy school as soon as she has received the first vaccination, and I also advise my puppy owners to do so, too. I consider puppy school to be very important for the little dogs, to get to know as many other dogs and breeds and their different behaviour as possible (which did not keep mom Dzingha away from hating Beagles *sigh*).

My own puppy accompanies me wherever I go, to the restaurant, to the market, to the station, to friends, to the hotel (to be honest I hate it and I am always worried about the equipment) etc.

Very early I train my puppy to allow me to take food away, especially raw bones. In the first months, and later when they come into puberty, I do hand feeding from time to time. My puppy has to learn to stay alone from the beginning, for the simple reason that I have to take my adult dogs for big walks. And I don't want my puppy to stay together with her mom 24 hours a day, this makes too dependent on the mother and it's impedimental for the puppie's self-assurance.

All this standing above does not mean that it makes sense to daily stress the puppy with new situations, it is indeed wise not to do too much and give them enough time to rest and sleep. And of course it is not essential that they get to know a hand barrow for example, and one might ask why a TM should been taken to town, but I would like them to get to know as many different things and noises as possible, to allow them to become competent and self-confident adults in everyday situations.

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