



Puppy Immunization and Socialization Schedule (8 to 16 Weeks)

Why It Matters

Proper early socialization and timely vaccination help puppies thrive, shaping their confidence, resilience, and health for life. Use this guide to give your puppy the best start by blending positive experiences with immune protection supported by science and industry best practice.

Key Principles

- **Socialization:** Safely expose your puppy to new people, friendly pets, varied environments, and novel experiences, using treats and praise to build positive associations. Avoid overstimulation and never force interaction. NOTE: The first week should be a week of calm and exploration of the puppy's new surroundings and family, NOT a whirlwind of visitors and outings.
- **Immunization:** Follow your veterinarian's tailored vaccine schedule to protect against contagious diseases, especially before play with unfamiliar dogs or public outings. Each State and County may have updated vaccines schedules, so go with what your veterinarian recommends.
- **LEGS Model:** Consider Learning, Environment, Genetics, and Self, each puppy's background and personality affects their progress. Go at your puppy's pace and build trust through gentle guidance.

Quick-Reference Schedule

Age (Weeks)	Immunization	Socialization Focus	Actions/Notes
Birth-7	Breeders Schedule with their Veterinarian	Gentle handling by trusted humans, environmental introduction	Limit to household, crate training
6-8	DAP (Distemper, Adenovirus, Parvovirus), Bordetella	Sound exposure (music, appliances), new surfaces, gentle handling	Start crate time, begin vet visits
8-10	DAP/DHLPP (add Lepto), Parainfluenza	Meet different people (adults, kids); car rides; calm play	First puppy group classes possible

10–12	DAP/DHLPP (repeat), Bordetella, +/- Lyme	Novel objects/textures, supervised puppy playgroups	Encourage independence, confidence
12–14	DAP/DHLPP (repeat), +/- Canine Influenza	Visit new safe locations (parks, pet-friendly stores); brief walks	Reward calm exploration, validate fear responses without accentuating them
14–16	DAP/DHLPP (final), Rabies, +/- Lyme, +/- Canine Influenza	Meeting friendly, vaccinated dogs; exposure to traffic sounds, grooming	Puppy classes essential; monitor play
16+	Follow vet's advice on boosters and lifestyle vaccines	Keep building positive experiences; consider new environments	Socialization continues beyond 16 weeks

Always consult your vet and adjust timing/lifestyle vaccines for your region and puppy's health.

LEGS: Building a Well-Rounded Puppy

- **Learning:** Use positive reinforcement for every new experience; gentle, frequent rewards shape your puppy's brain and trust.
- **Environment:** Create safe, enriched spaces with toys and varied textures; rotate environments to spark curiosity.
- **Genetics:** Understand breed tendencies (some puppies may be bold, others cautious) and embrace your dog's unique personality.
- **Self:** Respect each puppy's pace. Monitor health (stool samples, nutrition), and adapt activities based on age/energy.

Recommended Socialization Activities by Week

- **Week 8–9:** Gentle handling, soft sounds, meeting calm adults and older children.
- **Week 10–11:** Exposure to car rides, short crate sessions, and safe puppy classes.
- **Week 12–13:** Supervised group play (vaccinated puppies), new household objects, leashed walks in quiet areas.

- **Week 14–16:** Visits to busy environments (outdoors, pet shops), introduction to friendly dogs, basic grooming experiences.

Your Action Plan

Make every week count! Pair fun new experiences with timely immunizations and always observe your puppy's reactions. Sign up for a Karen Pryor Puppy Start Right or AKC S.T.A.R. class. These programs bring expert guidance and great social opportunities. Keep your vet in the loop and continue socializing beyond 16 weeks for a lifetime of happy, healthy companionship. Your puppy deserves the best; start shaping those happy, tail-wagging memories today!

Disclaimer

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