



# Puppy's Rule of Twelve

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Puppies need a great deal of socialization at an early age to help them grow up into well-adjusted companions. The list of activities below was developed for puppy adopters as a fun way to properly socialize your new pet.

Make sure all experiences are safe and positive for the puppy. Each encounter should include treats and lots of praise. Slow down and add distance if your puppy is scared!

By the time a puppy is 12 weeks old\*, he/she should have:

**Experienced 12 different surfaces:** wood, carpet, tile, cement, linoleum, grass, wet grass, dirt, mud, puddles, deep pea gravel, grates, uneven surfaces, on a table, on a chair, etc.

**Played with 12 different objects:** fuzzy toys, big and small balls, hard toys, funny sounding toys, wooden items, paper or cardboard items, milk jugs, metal items, car keys, etc.

**Experienced 12 different locations:** front yard (daily), other people's homes, school yard, lake, pond, river, boat, basement, elevator, car, moving car, garage, laundry room, kennel, veterinarian hospital (just to say hi and visit, lots of cookies, no vaccinations), grooming salon (just to say hi), etc.

**Met and played with 12 new people (outside of family):** include children, adults (mostly men), elderly adults, people in wheelchairs, walkers, people with canes, crutches, hats, sunglasses, etc.

**Heard to 12 different noises (ALWAYS keep positive and watch puppy's comfort level—we don't want the puppy to be scared):** garage door opening, doorbell, children playing, babies screaming, big trucks, loud motorcycles, skateboards, washing machine, shopping carts, power boat, clapping, loud singing, pan dropping, horses neighing, vacuums, lawnmowers, birthday party, etc.

**Been exposed to 12 fast moving objects (don't allow puppy to chase):** skateboards, roller-skates, bicycles, motorcycles, cars, people running, cats running, scooters, vacuums, children running, children playing soccer, squirrels, cats, horses, cows, etc.

**Experienced 12 different challenges:** climb on, in, off, and around a box; go through a cardboard tunnel; climb up and down steps; climb over obstacles; play hid and seek; go in and out a doorway with a step up or down; exposed to an electric sliding door; umbrella; balloons; walk on a wobbly table (plank of wood with a small rock underneath); jump over a broom; climb over a log; bathtub (and bath); etc.

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**Handled by owner (and family) 12 times a week:** hold under arm (like a football), hold to chest, hold on floor near owner, hold in-between owner's legs, hold head, look in ears and mouth, touch in-between toes, hold and take temperature (ask veterinarian), hold like a baby, trim toe nails, hold in lap, etc.

**Eaten from 12 different shaped containers:** wobbly bowl, metal, cardboard box, paper, coffee cup, china, pie plate, plastic, frying pan, Kong, treat ball, spoon fed, paper bag, etc.

**Eaten in 12 different locations:** back yard, front yard, crate, kitchen, basement, laundry room, bathroom, friend's house, car, school yard, bathtub, up high (on work bench), under umbrella, etc.

**Played with 12 different puppies (or safe adult dogs) as much as possible.**

**Been left alone safely, away from family and other animals (5-45 minutes) 12 times a week.**

**Experienced a leash and collar 12 different times in 12 different locations.**

Even if your puppy is over 12 weeks old he/she will benefit from these tips.  
Start socialization right away!

*Written By:  
Margaret Hughes, Positive Paws Dog Training ©2002  
Adapted with permission from:  
Pat Schaap's "RULE OF 7's" for 7-week old puppies*