



Socialization Homework

Taking the “pet” out of “petrified” and putting the ‘treat” into “treatment”

We want your pet to love coming to Gateway Pet Hospital! Be it a routine annual examination or due to a medical concern, chances are your pet will come to see us at least once per year. Outside of veterinary visits, most dogs require regular handling for at-home procedures like nail clipping, routine grooming and health checks. We have created a checklist of simple but important items for socialization training. You can attempt to do some of these items at home to help make their experience with handling and veterinary visits less stressful. Remember that consistency is key! We want to show your pet that none of these experiences are harmful. Pair these activities with a food reward, especially in the beginning. If your pet seems a little anxious, pair it with a higher value treat. If, at any point, your pet becomes nervous, anxious, or aggressive, do not continue to push him/her too far and contact us for guidance. Remember that pushing your pet can make things worse and cause him/her to move backwards. The goal here is to create positive experiences. Below the checklist, we have included a guide for assessing their comfort level. For each activity, you can enter the score in the box; this can help track progress.

Specific Socialization	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat	Sun
Checking the ears							
Examining mouth and gums (lift lips)							
Opening eyelids gently							
Gently squeezing feet							
Lifting paws up to check feet							
Handling and trimming toenails							
Gently pinching skin							
Gently poking skin with capped pen							
Touching and squeezing the nose							
Cradling pet in your arms on his back							
Holding pet in your lap							
Holding pet on back while giving tummy rub							
Hugging your pet							
Pulling on the collar							
Grabbing pet gently by other parts of body							
Wiping pets body with towel							
Putting on a head halter or muzzle							
Putting on a harness							

Scores in response to socialization training

Use this guide to help assess your dog's body language in order to assess their comfort level with each activity. While we have listed a wide variety of body postures, your pet does not necessarily need to display everything listed. If a visual guide is more useful please refer to the body language guide ([link](#)). If in doubt, it's always better to go back a step and take things slowly. These activities should be fun for everyone, not a list that you should feel the need to push through.

SCORE 0: OK TO CONTINUE

- Does not resist the action at all, accepts treats readily.
 - Body language indicating your pet is relaxed/neutral: ears in neutral position, not perked forward or held back, brow and eyes and lips soft/relaxed, body loose, tail carriage neutral, slow back and forth tail and butt wag
 - Body language indicating your pet is interested: Looking directly but not intensely, tail up slightly, mouth open slightly but loose lips, ears perked forward, slight pupil dilation.

SCORE 1: CONTINUE SLOWLY AND CAUTIOUSLY

- Resists the action momentarily but accepts treats and lets you proceed without resistance.
- Reward the action and repeat several times. Attempt to get to a score of 0 before proceeding.
 - Body language indicating your pet may be excited and/or anxious: Tail up higher, mouth closed with tense, eyes more intense, brow tense, hair may be just slightly up on the back and tail, may be expectant and excited or highly aroused. Because these emotional states (overly excited versus anxious) can have similar body language, it may be best to pause the activity and allow your pet to relax before proceeding.
 - Mild stress: Lip licking, avoids eye contact, turns head away without moving away, lifts paw, slight panting.

SCORE 2: STOP, BACK OFF TO A LESS INVASIVE LEVEL

- Resists the action for more than 3 seconds more than three times. May even refuse the reward.
- Go back to a less invasive action and reward that action when pet shows a score of 1 to 2
 - Body language indicating mild to moderate stress: Ears slightly back or to the side, tail down but not necessarily completely tucked, furrowed brow, slow movements or unable to settle, fidgeting, attention seeking to owner, panting with a tighter mouth, moderate pupil dilation.

SCORE 3: SHOULD NOT GET TO THIS LEVEL IF POSSIBLE

- Growling, trying to bite, trying to escape, vocalizing, refusing the treat,
- You may have missed earlier signs of stress in your pet if you get to this level.
- Go way back to an action that your pet responds to with less stress and reward that, or contact us for guidance
- With extreme stress you can see a wide variety of responses that can range from fight (aggression), flight (escape) or freeze (immobility) and your pet may move between these responses.
 - Body language indicating extreme stress: ears back, tail tucked, actively trying to escape - slinking away or running, mouth closed or excessive panting - tongue tight instead of loose out of mouth, showing whites of eyes, brow furrowed, pupils dilated, trembling, immobility, body hunched, hard stare, growling, baring teeth, biting

Body Language of Fear in Dogs



Slight Cowering



Major Cowering

More Subtle Signs of Fear & Anxiety



Licking Lips
when no food nearby



Panting
when not hot or thirsty



Brows Furrowed, Ears to Side



Moving in Slow Motion
walking slow on floor



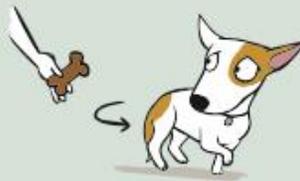
Acting Sleepy or Yawning
when they shouldn't be tired



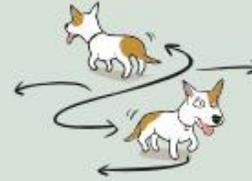
Hypervigilant
looking in many directions



Suddenly Won't Eat
but was hungry earlier



Moving Away



Pacing

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The Art and Science of Animal Behavior

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