

Steps for optimum social development of puppies and kittens

1. Choose breeding animals that exhibit desirable social behavior
2. Select pets that have been raised in a domestic (home) environment by their mother
3. Choose pets that have had handling and early stimulation (rather than isolation and avoidance)
4. Provide opportunities for socialization with humans and other species prior to the end of the socialization period
 - Optimum age for canine pet adoption may be 7–8 weeks (less inhibited, before the fear period)
 - Optimum age for feline pet adoption is prior to the end of primary socialization at 7–9 weeks
5. Habituate to as many stimuli and environments as practical during the early months of life
6. Consider all people, animals, stimuli, and locations to which the pet may be exposed at a later age but are not presently in the environment and seek out exposure. Be particularly diligent about exposure to children, the elderly, or people who are physically or behaviorally different from family members
7. Avoid excessively fearful situations and exposures – monitor the pet for any emerging signs of fear and keep all meetings and greetings positive. Use toys or treats for a positive association
8. Continue exposure to conspecifics into adulthood to maintain healthy social relationships
9. Consider puppy and kitten classes for early training and socialization in a controlled environment