

**Dog Talk LLC – Maureen Ross, MA**  
**Embrace the 8 Preps for Puppy Socialization**

By the time a puppy is 4 months old they should be gently guided and exposed to sights, sounds and smells. A good breeder will begin this from the moment they are born! Generally, puppies join us at around 8 or 9 weeks. Socialization and gentle systematic desensitization continues with the new puppy parents and at various stages of development.

Here are tips for what your puppy / dog should continue to be exposed to, gradually, no flooding if you can help it.

1. **Been on 8 different surfaces** (carpet, wood, vinyl, concrete, grass, dirt, gravel, grate, rubber mat).
2. **Played with 8 different types of objects** (big balls, small balls, puzzle (enrichment) type games/toys like go find) Kong's, hard toys, soft toys, old sweatshirt sleeve tied in a knot, etc.).
3. **Been in 8 different locations** (front yard, back yard, basement, kitchen, bedroom, laundry room, bathroom, crate / kennel). Little walks, especially for young pups.
4. **Been exposed to 8 challenges** (climbed on and off a box, gone through a tunnel, climbed up and down a small step (with guidance), played hide and seek, entered in and out of doorways).
5. **Eaten from 8 different containers** (stainless steel, plastic, cardboard, pie plate, frying pan, Kong Wobbler, paper plate, gently from hands (one kibble/treat at a time)).
6. **Eaten in 8 different locations** (crate, yard, kitchen, basement, laundry room, bedroom, playpen, car (ready for traveling to unfamiliar places)).
7. **Met and played with 8 new people** (children, elderly, people with hats, different cultures if possible, people with walkers, wheelchairs).
8. **Gradual, gentle exposure to 8 different sights, sounds and smells** (Canine Desensitization cd's, like Through a Dog's Ears with soft music integrating different real-world sounds, parks, parking lots, short walks in the neighborhood).