



## Dos & Don'ts

To socialize your Rottie effectively, you need to know how to do it, and how *not* to do it. Here are some socialization dos and don'ts:

**DO** start early. If you've brought home a Rottweiler puppy, the time to start socializing her is now. Waiting until the dog has had all her shots may protect her physical health, but it wreaks havoc on her mental health. By exposing your puppy to everything and everyone she may encounter while living with you, you'll help ensure that she grows up to be a well-mannered, happy and healthy adult.

**DON'T** take unnecessary risks. Early socialization doesn't mean that you have to expose your puppy to disease or potentially dangerous social situations. For example, a dog park might include dogs who haven't been fully immunized — unlike an obedience class or puppy playgroup in which owners must show proof of their dog's immunization — or dogs who play too roughly with your puppy. "I wouldn't recommend taking most puppies to a dog park until they have had all their shots," says Robin Bennett, a trainer from Woodbridge, Va. "But I'd take them to a class prior to that time."

**DON'T** go too fast. Although you want to expose your Rottweiler puppy to as many sights, sounds, people and pets as you can, don't force a frightened dog to confront the object of her fear. "If your dog is scared, slow down and provide more distance and more time," Bennett says.

**DO** protect your puppy. Experts agree that you need to protect your puppy from well-meaning but clueless individuals. "Don't allow people to gang up on your pup or swamp her; you control the situation and allow one person at a time to pet her and love her," says Liz Palika, a trainer in Oceanside, Calif. "Don't allow people to be rough with your puppy, or pull her ears or poke her eyes. You want your dog to think people are pretty cool, not scary and hurtful."

**DON'T** reward inappropriate behavior. If your puppy deals with a scary object by charging at it or otherwise behaving aggressively, don't praise her or give any other reward. "The treat and your praise aren't to make your dog feel better, but instead are to reward the behavior you wish to see happen again," Palika says.