

A Recipe for Socialization

By Pam Thompson

Two things determine the type of companion each wolfdog will be. The first is the inherited behaviors that will be passed from the parents to the pups, and the second is the owner's ability to socialize their wolfdog.

For best results the following should be prepared in advance:

(Prenatal)

Select well-rounded parents with great dispositions. Mother should be kept in a calm clean environment. Parents should be fed well balanced meals and be in peak physical condition. (ie. Receive vet care and be wormed regularly)
Select content range and breed to your particular taste.

(Postnatal)

Take one pup from well-socialized and stable parents
Gently mix with the following:



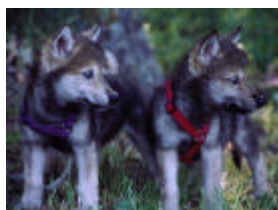
Gently handle pup a few minutes one or two times per day for two weeks following birth (be sure this includes large doses of love for both mother and pups. ***The pup's body is extremely fragile during this period so make sure you provide support to the head and back at all times.***)

[NOTE: Be careful not to overly stress the pup (handling is limited to gently holding pup for a few minutes.) Also be sure that feet and hands are free from disease when entering

pup's environment for first two months. (***Step in bleach vat and wash hands with Purell or other sanitizer before handling pup.***) Remember that a pup cannot regulate body temperature so be careful that you do not allow them to become too cold or warm.]

Increase handling and time spent with pup beginning with the opening of their eyes. Be careful not to over stimulate pup. (At two weeks, a pup begins to regulate its own body temperature, hear, and see.)

[NOTE: Socialization with siblings begins in earnest around week three and teaches many things needed later in life. Socialization to other canines is almost if not equally important as socialization to humans.]



By week 4, pup has begun the weaning process and is learning bite inhibition from siblings—which helps with bite inhibition to humans.

4 to 6 weeks

Take pup with you every where you can, or make arrangements for them to be cared for by others while you are away.

(NOTE: Pup should only be put down in clean environments that are free from disease, otherwise carry a playpen for pup. ***Everyone should always wash their hands before handling a pup.***)

Time when pup is awake should be spent as follows:

- 1/2 of the time - add toys and teach the pup through play and talk to the pup while working with it.
- 1/4 of the time - hold the pup, love, and talk to it.
- 1/4 of the time - allow pup to play alone with toys and explore under your supervision.

Activities:

- Gently add baby leash and teach pup to walk on leash (***Start with just a loose collar, then go to draping baby leash over body, letting pup get used to it & then attach to leash. Or, leashing can easily be taught by putting the leash on the pup and letting them follow after another dog or adult on the walk.***)
- Hand feed pup treats once introduced to solid food
- Play with the pups feet and toenails, inspect pup's mouth and teeth, (***This will help you and the vet when the pup gets older and has to have either their teeth or feet checked.***)
- Introduce pup to others under supervision by you. (***If they handle the pup have them wash their hands first and make sure they have not been around any other dogs that might carry diseases.***)
- Teach the word "no."
- Introduce pup to car rides.
- Begin teaching the words "sit" and "drop-it."





- Introduce the pup to household activities (i.e. stereo, TV, vacuum, etc.)

6 weeks (i.e. time when pup is awake)

Take pup with you every where you go - everywhere you can. (NOTE: Pup should only be put down in clean environments that are free from disease.)

Time when the pup is awake should be allotted as follows:

- ½ time should be spent training, playing and loving pup.
- ½ time pup should be allowed to set activities with you and play alone.

Add to previous activities:

- Increase the number of toys; include different textures, noise-makers, etc. (*Do not give toys with parts that can be easily bitten off and swallowed.*)
- Continue to introduce pup to strangers.
- Hand feed treats, begin to teach other basic commands through play.
- Hand feed or at least sit and pet pup while he eats (add special treats such as boiled meat to normal food during meal time.)
- Leash should be accepted as fun time.
- Begin teaching manners (i.e. not jumping on guests, mouthing, etc.)
- Get the pup used to you holding it by the collar.
- Get pup used to hugging it from above (which is a dominant position by you.)
- Other animals should be shown to pup through fence while you hold the pup.
- Designate a safe place outside for pup where he can see things that will be common in his environment and allow him time to explore. (*You should supervise this time.*)
- Gently reinforce the word “No” by shunning and “GOOD BOY/GIRL” through praise.
- Introduce to different flooring ie carpet, slick hardwood floors, Astroturf, tile and linoleum.
- Introduce time outs for continued bad behavior.*



...tive behavior (i.e. grabbing something that they aren't supposed to have) gets instant attention from you and that you will stop what you are doing and pay attention to the pup. Instead of reacting negatively, try redirecting the pup's behavior. For instance, when they seek your attention by grabbing something they shouldn't have, instead of yelling NO and chasing them, try getting their favorite toy and sitting down with it. When the pup either drops or brings the object they have stolen to you, put it away. Then play with the pup and their toy as a reward. Eventually they will learn to grab the toy instead of your things.]

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(* A “time out” is time spent confined with nothing to do- i.e. no access to toys, family members, etc. and should be accompanied by “bad dog,” or other words of disapproval. They should be ignored or shunned during time out. The time out should last only 10 to 15 minutes. If the behavior is repeated once they are released, then they should be given a second time out.)

Following puppy shots and once immunity is in place through 3 months:

- Pup should be with you — 100% of the time (or as much as possible)
- ¾ of time should be spent training, playing and loving pup
- ¼ of time pup should be allowed to set activities or play alone



Continue with previous activities and add the following:

- Introduce pup to new places while on leash instead of carrying it (walk at a speed that the pup can easily keep up.)
- You can begin to decrease time spent with pup during feeding time unless signs of food aggression occur.
- Work on bite inhibition with humans (i.e. buzz saw era begins due to teething- NO BITE! will be your mantra until the middle of the 4th month.)
- Allow supervised interaction and play time with other canines



(NOTE: Some behavioral problems may begin to surface at this time. It is important to identify those problems and stop them while the pup is still young.)

If problems should occur there are several ways to deal with them.

- Find a positive reinforcement trainer.

(NOTE: Be sure that any new environment is sanitized because the immunity received from the mother begins to diminish around 6 weeks of age and puppy shots will not have time to be effective for approximately two weeks.)

(NOTE: By this time the pup has probably learned that nega-

- Research and identify the root of the problem and correct the problem
- Find alternatives to the behavior such as set out on Page 2.

Below are a few problems that some wolfdog owners face:

Pup does not respond to corrections and is showing aggression towards owner.

- Have you been consistent in your corrections?
- Has everyone in the family been consistent in their corrections?
- Have you hand fed the pup while you were eating?
- Have you allowed the pup to dictate where he goes and where he sits?
- Are you the one to move if he is comfortable?
- Introduce pup to other animals and allow time alone with those that are safe.
- When the pup goes somewhere, (i.e. through a door) who controls the situation, you or the pup?



[NOTE: Remember canines live in a hierarchy. The top dog gets to eat first, has the best seat in the house, and leads the way wherever they go. Canines are not going to follow your rules unless you mold them in a way that they can understand. By allowing the pup to eat with you, you are telling

him he is on an equal level to you and other family members. (Even though sharing your meal with the pup is a great bonding tool, it should be done after you have finished eating.) By allowing him to sit in your chair while you sit on the floor, you are telling him he is above you in rank. Unless you understand these rules, you may easily create an animal that will challenge you for top rank within the family unit later in life.]

If your answer to all of the above is no, then you may have an animal with an alpha personality and need to seek help for specific problems.

Food aggression is another problem that often develops during this phase. However, if the pup has been raised with siblings and you have spent time with the pup during mealtimes and taught hand feeding, this can usually be avoided. There are numerous positive reinforcement techniques to help work through food aggression. Most basically teach the pup that if it is nice during meal time it gets better and more food.



If you have made it through the first three months and have done all of the above, you have done the initial groundwork that will allow you to socialize your wolfdog.

[NOTE: This is the time when the pup may begin to exhibit fearfulness. How you deal with the pup during stress can influence how he later deals with unique or novel experiences. If you show excessive concern during a fear reaction, you may be confirming to the pup that there is something to fear. However, if you calmly wait and let the pup see your lack of reaction to a situation, they will often follow your lead.]

[NOTE: Do not be surprised to find that if you leave a wolfdog unattended in either your house or your vehicle that they have “ate” a couch, a car seat, etc. Any canine can be very destructive if left unattended.]

**4 months - 2 years.
Socialization begins in earnest.**

Continue all of the above and add the following:

- Do unique things with your wolfdog (play on playground equipment, go swimming, try agility, etc.)
- Expose to as many new and different situations as you can, but make sure not to overly stress the pup
- Celebrate the end of the buzz saw era once pup is through teething (around 4 ½ months)
- Expect shyness towards strangers for short periods throughout the next two years. *



[* Shy periods are normal. (Most human children go through some shy periods too.) Since you have spent the last several months with your pup, you should have a good understanding of its personality and tendencies. Dependent upon personality, you may be able to ignore the shyness and show your pup that strangers are still okay. Or, for some pups, allowing strangers access when they are exhibiting signs of fear may cause a major setback that will be hard if not impossible to overcome and even damage your own bond with the pup. For pups that are more shy by nature, it is often best to allow them to set their own comfort zone concerning strangers rather than you forcing them.]

[Note: Be careful not to ignore pup’s socialization through the Holiday Season. It is easy to stop taking the pup places when you are trying to prepare for Thanksgiving, Christmas, etc., and often times, we feel that winter is too cold to go places and do things with the pup. A pup will grow and mature more than you realize





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during a three or four month period. Don't be surprised if you fail to continue socialization throughout this period to find that your pup refuses to go places, and that much of your hard work has been lost.]



[**NOTE:** At puberty, a wolfdog often behaves much like your teenage child. They can be smart mouthed, argumentative, and seem to forget every single thing you have taught them. Wolfdogs can try your patience just as much as any teenager. During this phase, you must remain firm, yet loving and allow them the time and space

they need to mature.]

NEVER'S and DO NOT'S.

- **NEVER** leave a large canine alone with a child. A child cannot be held accountable for knowing all the rules of canine behavior.
- **NEVER** let the last outing for your pup be a bad experience. If something negative happens, then make sure you quickly follow the outing with another trip that includes fun and a positive experience.
- **NEVER** use negative reinforcement as a common training tool.
- **DO NOT** make a habit of yelling at the pup.

This is a basic recipe that should be modified for the personalities of the people and the animals involved. In order to successfully socialize any pup, you must first know its behaviors and idiosyncrasies. Each dog and owner are individuals and what works well for one, may not work for another. While most people cannot spend 100% of their time with their pup, it is in the animal's best interest to spend as many quality hours as possible. If the owner only spends short periods of time with the pup, only the positive happy traits of the pup will be shown. Longer periods are needed to observe the full spectrum of behaviors. This usually cannot be accomplished in a few minutes or even a few hours each day. You must also firmly establish a bond with the pup before any socialization can be successfully completed. Most feel that in order to establish a strong and lasting bond, it is necessary to spend as much time as possible with the pup during the first six months of its life. After six months of age, the pup will start to exhibit signs of independence that will increase as the pup matures.

The content of your animal, the inherent behavioral characteristics of the line, and how much time and effort you put into each pup will determine how social that animal will be. However, some high content wolfdogs, regardless of the time and effort you expend, will never be comfortable in public settings. You should realize this and not expect more from the animal than it is able to give.

If you are unwilling or unable to dedicate the time and effort needed, it is unfair to blame your wolfdog for what you failed to do.

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- **DO NOT** blame the pup for being smarter than you. Often wolfdog owners must be creative in order to correct a behavior and should be prepared for stubbornness.
- **NEVER** take on a challenge when you know you are at a disadvantage and have little chance of winning. Instead change the direction of the challenge and set up the situation to where you can win.
- **NEVER** blame the pup for your mistakes.
- **NEVER** ignore problems that continue to escalate. Seek help and stop them before they are firmly set in place.
- **NEVER** expect a canine to follow rules they do not understand. Canines are not democratic; the only way for them to behave well is if they understand the reason why they should.
- **NEVER** train a wolfdog to be aggressive.
- **DO NOT** beat or hit a wolfdog. They have very good memories and once it gets older, it may try to get even. Even a single slap or hit can be detrimental. Also, using rolled up newspaper or magazine just teaches the animal to either fear paper or teaches it to hate paper, in which case he will take every opportunity to shred it.
- **DO NOT** assume that a wolfdog will want to remain indoors once grown. Many prefer to live outside and so proper containment is mandatory.
- **NEVER** keep a wolfdog on a chain as a primary source of containment.