

Understanding the Four Kinds of Canine Social Types

Understanding your dog's social group helps you advocate for them and set them up for success.

Not all dogs want to be friends with every other dog—and that's okay.

Dog Social: These dogs are friendly, tolerant, and playful with most or all dogs. They often show excitement in group play or when meeting new dogs. They are often well socialized as puppies, but it's not uncommon for them to also need guidance and boundaries to prevent rude or overstimulated behaviors.

Dog Selective. These dogs get along with some dogs, but they are not social butterflies. They usually prefer calmer dogs or dogs with a similar play style. They can be friendly, but they often require proper introductions. They may ignore or avoid dogs they don't click with, but can react negatively if pressured.

Dog Tolerant: These dogs are fine coexisting around other dogs but rarely seek engagement. Often, they are not interested in play or socializing. This social style is often mistaken for aloof or unfriendly, but this is a very manageable social type, and they are respectful and easygoing if given space.

Dog Aggressive: These dogs struggle around other dogs and may react out of fear, frustration, or defensiveness. They require structure, space, and support. With the right training, we can help them feel neutral around other dogs, but they likely will not have any dog 'friends' and prefer to keep it that way. Some can get along with housemates with the right training/introductions, but not all.

Understanding your dog's social group helps you advocate for them and set them up for success. Social types can also shift over time due to age, hormones, trauma, social exposure, or training. Puppies can be dog-social and grow more selective or intolerant—and before you ask, no, your dog does not need to be overly social to be a "good dog". Wanting space from others is normal!

Proper socialization is essential for all dogs but this doesn't mean excessively playing with other dogs. **True proper socialization** is about neutrality—teaching your pup to calmly observe people, dogs, and situations without needing to engage. Regardless of their social group, all dogs benefit from being taught neutrality around other dogs.

Need Help? Let's talk about your dog's social type and how training can help set your dog up for success! Contact Proper Paws Dog Training today to get started at taylor@proper-paws.com or www.proper-paws.com

