

Dogs and Kids

Most dogs truly love children, and this bond can and should be beautiful. However, to ensure that the experience is positive and safe, we cannot stress enough the necessity for parents teach their own (and other) children how to behave around dogs!

Whether it is the dog or the child that is the new addition to the pack, children need to learn to be gentle and calm around animals, and to be respectful – and the dog will need to learn to be respectful of children also. It is up to you to manage this relationship and set it up for success.

And, of course, always supervise the children when they are with the dog.

Getting to know each other

- ❖ kids should not run up to new dogs or try to pet or hug them immediately; instead, let the dog come up to the child to sniff, while everything is calm.
- ❖ allow a new dog to observe the kids from a distance (e.g. from the safety of his crate, or while on a walk) so he gets used to their sounds and movements.
- ❖ go for walks together so the dog can bond with the children as part of a pack. If you recently added a baby to your family, the dog will be confused and will need to learn that this screaming creature is part of the pack; walks including the stroller and the dog are great.

Calmness first

The way children tend to move (excited, fast, rambunctious, loud, and with unpredictable gestures) is very confusing and potentially scary to some dogs, so make sure to teach your kids the proper way to behave around a dog, and allow the dog time to get used to the kids.

- ❖ until they know each other really well, kids should not rough-house or jump on the dog or try to hug them or pick them up - the dog could easily get scared and bite to defend itself.
- ❖ Also bear in mind that some dogs do not like to play, and small dogs can easily get hurt, so teach your kids to be respectful and gentle.

“Let Sleeping Dogs Lie”

Kids must learn to respect a dog's safe space! If the dog retreats to his bed or crate, the children must respect that. They must leave the dog alone to rest and sleep without disturbance.

Food

Kids should never disturb the dog while he/she is eating.

Toys

IF A DOG HAS POSSESSION OF A TOY, A CHILD SHOULD NEVER ATTEMPT TO TAKE IT FROM THE DOG! This is the number one situation where bites happen.

- If a dog is used to playing with toys, he/she will not know the difference between their own toys and the children's toys - to the dog, it is all just "stuff" lying around on the floor.
- Even more so: if the kids play with the dog using toys (for example, if kids play tug-of-war) the dog has learned that it is ok to challenge the kids over toys, and so he may challenge/defend a toy if the kids go to take it.

→ If the dog has something that he/she is not supposed to have, the adults must get the dog to drop it and then pick it up safely. Do not let a kid try to grab it from the dog!

Removing a toy: *You should be able to take toys away from your dog without issue – the dog should drop what he has and move away when you ask, so that you can safely pick it up. (As your kids get older, you can teach them to do this safely also.) HOWEVER, it is very common that people did not teach the dog to give up toys when asked, and toy-guarding is a real problem when kids come into the picture.*

→ If you need help with this, please schedule a training session.

Children are the future.

Please educate your children to take proper care of their pets.

Teach them that dogs are living beings, with needs and personalities of their own. They are not toys. Also as dogs get older and slower and want to sleep more and play less: a family member is a family member for life! Teach them the importance of spaying and neutering pets, so that we can begin to decrease our current, massive overpopulation of unwanted dogs and cats.

If the next generation learns to treat pets responsibly, we can make a huge difference and make our society a better place.

