

Best Practices For Introducing Dogs and Children

Children and dogs can have the most amazing relationships if both are taught how to properly interact and respect each other. Proper training and management of both children and dogs can prevent issues from ever happening.

What Kids Should Know

- Teach your children the proper ways to pet a dog and tell them not to pet strange dogs without asking permission. Tugging on a dog's ears or tail can be painful, and the dog might feel the need to bite in order to defend itself.
- It is also important to teach your children not to hug dogs, especially dogs you don't know. That type of "confinement" can be scary to a dog and is not a natural interaction. It also brings the child's face close to the dog's face, which can make the dog uncomfortable.
- Teach them to never tease or throw things at a dog. Children need to be especially gentle and calm around dogs that they don't know.
- Young kids should not run, jump or scream around an unfamiliar dog, since you are unaware of what actions may cause fear, predatory, or play behavior.
- Under no circumstances should they wake up a sleeping dog. The dog may be startled and can react defensively.
- Your children should not climb or pull on any dog, even the family dog. It may seem perfectly safe with your own dog, but just because a dog is tolerant does not mean they enjoy it and this may encourage children to try this with another dog and get bitten.
- Your children should not take things out of a dog's mouth and should leave an eating dog alone. Even though your own dog may not guard toys or food, another dog may, and it's better to respect a dog's space than to risk an incident. Therefore, it is safer to teach a child to leave all dogs alone during mealtime or while they're eating treats. In addition, your child should not take away the dog's toys.

How Can You Prepare Your Dog

- Socialize your puppy or dog to children. Supervise your puppy or dog at all times as she plays with children and stop the play if the child OR the dog gets too rough.
- Assess how your dog is when you or others interact with them. Does your dog become uncomfortable when petted in a certain spot? If so, work on desensitizing your dog to pets, touching their paws, and tail. Go slow and always give them respect if the dog shows signs of being uncomfortable.



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More Preventable Measures

- Have your whole family go to training classes with the dog. Everyone in your family should have some understanding of acceptable dog behavior.
- Watch your dog carefully around other people's children, since he or she does not know those children, and you can't be certain of how your dog will react. When in doubt, separate your dog from anything that risks their or a child's safety.
- Get your dog checked out by a vet if your dog's behavior suddenly changes (i.e., she becomes more irritable). Sudden negative behavior change may mean your dog is in pain and needs medical attention.

If you have a dog that is not okay around children, it is your responsibility to protect your dog from these tendencies. Never allow them to be in a situation where they might bite a child. If you teach both children and dogs how to properly interact, they will enjoy a wonderful, safe, fun relationship.

Good luck and happy wags from the AAA team!