

GUIDELINES FOR FAMILIES WITH DOGS



Never Leave Any Child 12 and Under Unattended With Any Dog or Puppy.

Strict supervision is a must. Every animal, even the so-called "fool proof" ones, have their limits. EVERY DOG BITES under the right circumstances. So keep supervision a strict rule in your household.



Children, Just Like Puppies, Need to Learn the Rules.

Children should be taught to pet softly, stay away from food dishes, toys and bones, and not to startle the pet when it is sleeping. All of these things can and should be done with the pet, but only when you, the adult, are there to supervise AND you have first trained your pet to enjoy and tolerate all of the above (using positive methods).



Babies and Toddlers Should Always Be Kept Higher Than The Dog.

Dogs see the world in hierarchy. You are either a leader or a littermate. Littermates get bossed around by being jumped on, pushed over, growled at, snapped at, and the final order, being bitten. Keep your small children up off the floor when the dog is in the same room.



Avoid Tug-Of-War, Wrestling, Ear Pulling, Pony Riding, Toy Hitting, Fur Grabbing, Chasing and Any Rough Play.

All these activities teach your dog or puppy to be rough with humans and to grab and bite. That's exactly what you are trying to avoid. Do not allow ANY family member, including adults, to engage in any rough play with your dog. Your family pet will attempt to play those rough games with your children and the results will not be harmonious. The basic rule of thumb is to never train your puppy or dog to do anything with you that you would not want him to do with a two-year old toddler.



Play Supervised Games That Foster Cooperation and Control.

These include games such as fetch, blowing bubbles, find it (hide a toy and have your dog find it), hide-and-seek (with your dog finding the kids for a treat or toy), kicking a soccer ball around or learning fun tricks. Avoid any games that gets your dog or puppy overly excited. If your dog is very high energy have an adult exercise the canine first through jogging, biking or a hard game of fetch before he interacts with your children. If your dog should become too excited during play, then end the game immediately and try again later when your dog (and perhaps child) is calmer.

Try to Pair Only Pleasurable Things With Your Children.

Try to avoid your dog or puppy being constantly yelled at, spanked, or isolated outdoors whenever the kids are around. This builds a negative association. Your dog should be doing fun stuff with your kids, even if it is limited to feeding a few treats at first.

Involve Your Child in Your Dog's Care.

Have your child help you feed your dog (they can tell the dog to sit before they put the bowl down), brush (as you hold the collar and feed a few treats), and walk (attach two leashes to your dog so your child holds one but you have the main leash for control and safety). Even just the presence of your child in the same room while your dog is receiving his favorite things or activities can help build a positive association to children.

Take a Formal Training Class With the Dog or Puppy.

This teaches you how to communicate and understand your dog better. Most teach cues like "come", "off", "sit", "down", "drop it", "stay", and "wait". Adults should initially teach all cues and then have the children practice them under supervision.

Watch For Signs of Trouble.

This includes your dog guarding food, toys, bones or resting places. Guarding starts with a simple freezing up of the body whenever the child comes too close and can quickly progress to growling, snapping, or biting if not addressed immediately.

Teach Your Children to Report to You Whenever They Hear the Dog Growling and It Is Clearly Not During Play.

The growl is a warning that your pet is not OK with the immediate situation at hand. Unless your child understands to back away immediately, they could be bitten. The only time you should not worry about your dog growling is when he is clearly playing. If you are hearing growling at any time other than in play, consult a professional immediately. Aggression problems, unless addressed immediately, tend to get worse.

Do Not Hit, Slap, Yell, Choke, Shake or Use a Shock Collar for Misbehavior or For Aggression.

These methods are unsuitable and can be very dangerous. They may also show your children how you resolve problems and they may start to mimic them, putting themselves in grave danger. Consult a professional at once if it involves aggression and keep the dog isolated from children until the problem has been dealt with quickly in a humane, safe way.

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Teach Your Children the Possum Stance.

Children are small, move erratically, yell and generally act crazy. Most dogs would either like to chase them or become very fearful of them. To a dog, a child running away is a great invitation to give chase, perhaps nipping and biting them. Teach your children that if a dog is chasing them to immediately stand still. Arms should be folded across their chest or over their face. Voices should become soft or completely quiet. Your child becomes a lot less interesting to your dog. He will calm down and go off to do something else within a matter of moments.



Give Your Dog or Puppy a Place to Retreat to When He Has Had Enough or You Cannot Provide Supervision.

Just like you, your dog will need some daily time off away from the children. Use an indoor crate that is off limits to the children or place your dog in a safe room such as a kitchen or bedroom with a baby gate.



Give Your Dog His Own Bed on the Floor and Out of Your Child's Room.

Letting your dog or puppy sleep with your child is not only unsanitary (dogs can carry a number of external and internal parasites) but also relays a message to the dog that your child is a littermate. Littermates sleep together. If your child insists in having the canine in his room, crate train your pet and put the crate in your child's room for sleeping.

Notice Good Behavior.

This cannot be emphasized enough. When your dog is being calm, playing with his own toys, or is being very gentle with your children, recognize it and reward it with ample praise and food treats.

Don't Give Your Dog Toys That Resemble Your Children's Toys or Clothing.

Stay away from fabric stuffed dog toys that resemble your child's stuffed animals. Don't give your dog an old shoe or towel to chew on and then expect him to know the difference between his stuff and your stuff.

Avoid Giving Your Dog Items That He May Protect.

Items such as rawhide, pig ears, smoked bones or real bones may be much too valuable to your dog. So much so that he may feel he must protect them. Certainly train your dog to allow things to be removed from his mouth by trading higher value treats for the item. (*But you must train the dog first before your children attempt it.*) Adults practice first to make sure there are absolutely NO problems, and then your children can practice under strict supervision.

Make Your Dog Part of Your Family.

Bad behavior is never improved by isolating your dog outdoors. Dogs are pack animals and need to be with their pack. They need to spend daily time with you! In most cases, isolation will actually increase your dog's behavior problems. If you are having specific behavior problems such as chewing, houstraining, digging, barking, or thievery, then consult a trainer for advice rather than keeping your dog outdoors.

