

How to Make Sure Your Dog Will Get On with Children

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Dogs can be fantastic pets to have around children, but you have to remember that they are still animals, and when your child doesn't know how to behave around a dog, or is too young to understand, there are many precautions that you should take.

First, it is very important that at least for the first while, the dog and the child should never be left alone together. By leaving them unattended, you are only asking for some kind of kid-dog misunderstanding that will lead to tears, or worse.

The following tips are some great practices to follow to keep safety and harmony among child and dog alike.

- 🐕 Teach kids about dogs – show your children how important it is to be safe around dogs. Tell them not to startle a dog that is sleeping or to try to take a dog's toy away. Equally, a dog should be left alone when it is eating. Essentially, teach your children respect for dogs.
- 🐕 Respect a dog's privacy – dogs need their "alone" time sometimes, too. Teach your child the importance of not disturbing a dog who is in a crate or kennel, or who is taking shelter in a favorite hide-out or corner.
- 🐕 Respect a child's privacy – the dog should not be permitted in the children's bedrooms.
- 🐕 The right approach – teach your children how important it is not to approach a dog that they don't know. If it's a friend or family member's dog, teach them to let the dog approach them, or to slowly approach the dog with a hand out to sniff. Children should never hassle a dog with large gestures or loud noises. Nervous children should be taught never to run away at the sight of a dog, as this will often cause a dog to chase, even if it is in play.
- 🐕 Neuter or spay – the younger the dog is neutered or spayed, the better. This procedure has a very good effect on the dog's temperament, making the dog far less likely to behave in an aggressive or vicious way.

- 🐕 Train – train your dog. Obedience not only helps you and your children maintain control over the dog, but it also decreases dominant tendencies, and helps the dog know his/her place in the family (pack). In this training, spend a lot of time petting the dog's face, head, and mouth area. This teaches your dog that the mouth isn't just for eating and biting, but petting too. It makes your dog much more affectionate.

- 🐕 Establish a routine – when your dog can predict when it's time to be fed, walked, and let outside for a while, s/he will be much happier. Structure and predictability are very much appreciated by dogs.

- 🐕 Don't stare – it's important for your child to learn not to hold a dog's stare or gaze. Dogs won't normally see children as having a higher rank in the family "pack". For this reason, if a child stares into a dog's eyes, it is seen as a challenge or even a threatening behavior.

- 🐕 Avoid tug-of-war games – as fun as it may seem, by allowing children to play tug-of-war with the dog, it is encouraging aggressive tendencies from the dog toward the children. This will make the dog think that it is alright to compete with children over items – no matter if they're the dog's or not.

- 🐕 Socialize the dog – whenever possible, socialize your dog with children. Start as early as possible. Expose the dog to children on a regular basis. You can start by simply walking the dog in a park where children often play, and move up gradually from there. The more exposure a dog has to children, the better the dog will understand the way children are, and will learn to tolerate and enjoy their company.

By using simple common sense, you can make certain that your dog is a perfect family member, and can be trusted with your children. It's all a matter of monitoring the children when they are around the dog, and teaching the children the do's and don'ts of dog behavior.

You'll find more about understanding and training your dog at www.all-about-puppies.com.