



# Children and Dogs

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## Children and Dogs



You will receive this pack, whether or not you have children yourself because we believe all adults have responsibility towards children and dogs to ensure the two get along safely together. Even if you are someone who doesn't come into contact with children very often, it is still important that your dog has some positive experiences of them, so that nothing unfortunate ever happens as a result of a chance meeting on a walk or elsewhere.

Many years ago dogs had a slightly different role to play in family life. Children used to be told never to approach strange dogs, never to go near family dogs when they were eating and if one of them growled it was the fault of the child. It seems that a lot has changed since then especially that these days we expect a dog to never, ever growl. The reality is really that expecting a dog never to growl is like asking a person never to complain and yet we do tend to expect dogs to be perfectly behaved around children without any help or training for either.

Many of our customers come to us through word of mouth following successful training of their own family dog with their children able to be fully involved. This is because we believe in a 'whole family' approach to training a dog and even if the family doesn't include children. We welcome anyone who has a role to play in caring for the dog including 'dog grandparents' and dog walkers.

If your dog does live with children full or part time, we would go as far as to say that it is essential that they attend training classes with you if at all possible and providing they are old enough to understand and take part. If this isn't possible it will be vital for you to share the training with everyone in the house. Even if your children are too young or too busy (as many teenagers are) to participate in the actual training, we do hope you will read this pack

together to ensure your dog or puppy becomes a happy, sociable family companion.

If you need advice specifically about your dog and a new baby, please ask for that separate advice leaflet.

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### Advice for Adults



-  Train and socialize your dog properly throughout their life and teach children from day one how to behave around dogs - don't think you can leave it until the dog becomes an adult - that is too late!
-  Give your dog his own retreat area, this could be a cage with the door left open or a bed in the corner of a room. Teach your children or any visiting children not to bother them when they are in it.
-  Be careful if your dog is to be fenced in somewhere, yours or a neighbour's children could tease him.
-  If your dog turns out not to like children, you and the children must change your actions around the dogs, take care and look for professional advice to help you with this problem; a dog wouldn't usually get to this stage on his own - it will be something that we have failed to teach or taught wrongly or the dog may be ill in some way, causing pain, confusion and fear.
-  Don't allow any child or adult to wind your dog up, encourage play biting or get them over excited. This may be amusing to some people when a puppy is small but when he is fully grown and his jaws and teeth are at full strength it will be the dog who gets into trouble for doing something he has been encouraged to do.

-  Teach children the rules about mutual respect, and that dogs are not toys. Discourage chasing or rough and tumble games - especially in puppies, it teaches them that this behaviour is OK and can trigger off a dog's predatory instincts - learned behaviour is a lot harder to re-train than teaching the right behaviour in the first place.
  
-  Ensure that you teach your puppy *bite inhibition* (see 'Dealing with play biting, harassing people and over excitement' in your Puppy Pack).
  
-  What your dog may tolerate from your or family children will not be the same with others, they are strangers, and visiting children must obey your ground rules. Don't expect the dog to. Your dog may like family children but he will not automatically generalise that liking to others unless he has consistently positive experiences with lots of them. Visiting children may play games with your own children that might worry your dog. In my own experience, many visiting children have little or no experience with dogs and many are fearful. Don't expect children like this to get used to your dog. Make everyone feel safe by placing your dog in a safe area. Even with apparently 'dog savvy' children always supervise dogs with them at all times - just because a child is unafraid of dogs does not mean they are good with them.
  
-  Just because a dog doesn't appear to dislike children, doesn't mean he actually likes them. Check whether your dog *actively* enjoys children or whether he is just tolerant (see Canine Communication leaflet).
  
-  Keep your dog away from energetic children's' games. The notion that all dogs should be able to play football nicely is unfair on the poor dog. They will chase the ball, run away with

it and often burst it, causing much upset. They will also chase the children and jump up and young dogs will play bite and even older ones may nip in excitement. Keep the dog away - even watching children play can over-excite a dog and if he must play football, teach him yourself first, calmly and positively, then teach the rules to everyone else.

-  Do not allow your children or adults to harass your dog, play roughly, tease in any way or hug your dog - very few dogs actually like this, most just tolerate it. Children (and some adults) do not automatically know what teasing is, so they need to be taught positive ways to behave around dogs. In general, any behaviour that makes your dog feel worried or nervous is to be avoided, but you need to be able to read your dog's feelings through his body language to do this. If you are not sure about the differences between play and teasing, learn how to read your dog's body language and ask for professional advice.
-  Teach children and teenagers the warning signs that a dog is unhappy - yawning, pacing, moving away, cowed position, raised lip, growling, ridged facial muscles, stiffening, snapping. Dogs give plenty of signals before biting, so watch for them. See 'Canine Communication' handout for more information.
-  Teach children to play well, train, feed and groom the dog safely and always ensure they wash their hands afterwards.
-  Teach children not to go near a dog's toys, bowls, chews, treats, bed or anything the dog values unless safely supervised by adults. Just because a dog has always been alright with this in the past doesn't guarantee he will stay that way. Dogs are prone to mood changes the same as people are, but we might not be able to spot a bad mood in a dog until it's too late.

-  Teach your dog to be relaxed about people being near all the above things (see leaflet about preventing guarding in puppies and ask for specific advice about older dogs).
-  Taking something by force from a dog's mouth teaches him many things, but not to 'give' willingly. It may teach a dog to hang on to it better next time, or to hide where it can't be taken away next time. If a dog is a gentle soul who would never bite, he will have learned that 'his' humans are scary and untrustworthy. A dog that is less inhibited about biting may well react to the force with his own force - his teeth.
-  Teach your dog to 'leave; or 'give' using very motivational methods (never forceful or punitive methods) and teach children how to behave calmly if the dog takes something belonging to them. Dogs and children often value their possessions highly and react strongly when they are taken, so it is up to adults to teach both how to behave sensibly.
-  By teaching dogs and children the rules about possessions we can create greater safety for all.
-  Ensure that children know the fun ways there are to teach a dog to sit and lie down and give a paw and loads of other things - without even touching the dog. Pushing bottoms down for 'sit' and pulling front legs out for 'down' and so on is just unnecessary - it is dangerous for a dog's skeleton especially a puppy's and at best it will be uncomfortable and at worst painful.
-  Modern training techniques are taught in a fun, positive, hands-off way and these provide excellent interaction between even young children and dogs - again with adult supervision.

-  Games taught properly with rules, like tuggy and chase/retrieve games as detailed in your training folder are intended for adults to teach to the dog. Older children may learn to play by the rules also when the dog understands and always with adult supervision.
-  Dogs must be taught they can only take a toy from a person when invited and give it back when asked. This prevents your dog grabbing at things in people's hands, at home and in public.
-  Don't allow left over food to be fed from the table and don't expect a dog to leave children alone if they are carrying food around or leaving it on accessible surfaces. Keeping the dog separate from anyone when they are eating is a good management plan, thus avoiding the development of bad habits. When the meal is finished your dog can be allowed in to clean up the crumbs from under the table - very useful!
-  If you want your dog to 'leave' food alone that is within reach, this will require a great deal of positive training and should never be expected of a dog or puppy who hasn't had that training.
-  When training with treats or rewarding good behaviour, ensure your dog learns to take the treats gently - please ask for advice on this if your dog doesn't do this already.
-  Clean up regularly after your dog in the garden and when out and about. It is possible to teach your dog to go to the toilet in one particular area of the garden, please ask for advice.
-  Keep your dog under control at all times - they may be friendly but other people may not want to meet them, even if they have dogs themselves. Allowing your dog to run over to other people

can be seen as harassing them and if your dog is out of control you are breaking the law.

 Don't EVER believe that it is safe for a child to hold a dog on the lead alone. Always hold the lead closer to the dog than the child. Even if you think your dog is an angel, think about cats, squirrels and birds and even aggressive dogs appearing from a blind spot. DON'T RISK IT. If the child gets caught in the lead or doesn't let go a serious accident can happen.

 Teach children how to behave around stranger's dogs, friend's dogs, stray dogs and that not all dogs are friendly and why - see the leaflet for children.

 Relationships between dogs and people are fluid, just like human-human relationships. Be aware therefore that your dog's attitude to children may change as the children grow and/or he gets older.

 NO DOG IS HARMLESS - DON'T DO IT!! NO CHILD UNDER THE AGE OF 12 SHOULD BE LEFT ALONE WITH A DOG.

#### FURTHER READING

 We cannot recommend more highly the book by Kendal Shepherd called 'The Canine Commandments' - a book which every adult and child should read. I hold a copy for customers to borrow and also usually have copies available to buy for under £10. You may also be able to find it on [www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk) or order it from a local bookshop.

 There is also a fantastic book for 8-12 year olds, written by children for children all about how to interact with and train dogs. It's called "Good Dog" by Evelyn Pang and Hilary Louie. The ISBN number is 978-192924258-0 and it is published by

Dogwise ([www.dogwise.com](http://www.dogwise.com)) If you cannot get hold of it in this country, you can order direct from Dogwise in the US, they are very good and most of my orders have arrived inside one week.

 The Kennel Club sell a good CD Rom on their website called *DO YOU KNOW YOUR DOGGY DOs FROM YOU'RE YOUR DOGGY DON'Ts*



## Advice for Children and Teenagers

### **New Puppy?**

This leaflet is much easier to read if I just write 'he', rather than 'he or she' every time, so if you have a girl dog, just say 'she' everywhere I've written 'he'.

If you have a new puppy, you are probably very excited as puppies are very cute and can be lots of fun, but it is very important that puppies are helped to grow into calm, well behaved adult dogs.

### **Puppies Need to Have Choices**

First and foremost remember that your puppy is not a toy, he or she is a living, breathing, creature who has feelings and emotions just like you do.

Some puppies love to be cuddled and some absolutely hate it. Mostly though, puppies and dogs are like us, sometimes they want to play and cuddle and sometimes they just don't.

So always let your puppy or dog come to you, don't chase or grab him and then use the **5 Second Rule**:

- *Play with or cuddle your dog for 5 seconds*
- *Then stop and wait to see what your dog or puppy does then*
- *If he walks away - LET HIM GO! He's telling you very clearly he doesn't want to play or cuddle right now.*

- *If he tries to get you to play with him or cuddle or stroke him, fine, carry on, but stop every few seconds to check he doesn't want to go.*

If you need your puppy to move or go somewhere, practice calling him and using toys and treats to encourage him to where you want him to go, rather than grab, drag or move him around physically.

## **Puppies Need To Sleep**

When you first collect your puppy, he or she may only be a few weeks old and you may want to be with your puppy all the time and also want to cuddle and play with him. It is very important though to remember that he or she will need to sleep a lot in order to grow properly.

- 🐶 Your puppy should have his own special place to sleep where no children ever disturb him. Your family may arrange for him to have his own crate or place in the house and neither you or any brothers and sisters or friends should disturb him there.

## **Puppies Go To the Toilet Everywhere**

- 🐶 Young puppies wee and poo a lot in the house but they can't help it because they are just too young to control themselves. The adults in the house will be dealing with this but children of all ages can help by not making a fuss when the puppy goes to the toilet in the house, just letting an adult know calmly. Older children (over the age of twelve) can learn to take the puppy outside to go to the toilet and reward him when he goes.
- 🐶 It is very important that no-one gets cross with the puppy if he goes to the toilet in the house because being told off won't

teach him where he needs to go. Instead it will just teach him to go where people don't look - like under beds or behind sofas.

## **Puppies like to Play**

-  Your puppy will have his own personality. This means that he might be very gentle and cuddly or it might mean that he is very bouncy and naughty. Many puppies are all of these things some of the time.
  
-  Most puppies will use their teeth when playing and they often bite children. This can hurt quite a lot especially when your puppy gets older. This doesn't mean your puppy is nasty or means to hurt you, its just his way of playing like he would do if he was still with all his brothers and sisters. But just because play biting is normal for a puppy doesn't mean that you should put up with it. The adults you live with must teach the puppy that he mustn't put his teeth on people at all and you can help a lot with this. If your puppy starts to bite you, say "no" in a firm voice and if he stops, go back to playing with him. If he doesn't stop, stand up, cross your arms over your chest and calmly walk away (don't run) and calmly call for an adult to come and help. If your puppy is very excited he may try to follow you and jump up and keep biting so you must leave the room and shut the door behind you. This teaches the puppy that when he bites, his best friend goes away, but when he plays nicely his friend strays with him.

## **Puppies Like to Chase**

The adults in your house should ensure that your puppy does not chase you around, or nip you, by keeping the puppy inside if you are playing outside, or keeping the puppy busy with his own toys in a crate or separate room if you are playing inside.

## **Puppies need to learn all about living with people**

Puppies are not born knowing all about people and they cannot understand what we say or how we want them to behave unless we teach them in kind, understanding ways.

Training classes are the ideal place to learn about how to teach your puppy the things he needs to know

## **Puppies need to learn about the world outside**

The adults in your house should be teaching your puppy all about the world in an understanding way using treats and praise. Your job will be to help with this by staying calm and cheerful even when your puppy is scared of new things. Puppies must never be forced to put up with something they are scared of, even if it seems silly to you.

It is also very important not to pick your puppy up or make a fuss of him when he's scared as this will just tell him that you are scared too, making him really worry! Just make him feel safe by taking him calmly away from the scary thing.

## **Puppies must never, ever be smacked**

Smacking, hitting, kicking, squeezing, pulling ears or tails or teasing any animal is cruel and unnecessary. All the animal learns is that people are scary and can't be trusted. When a dog is scared he is more likely to bite and even puppy bites can be very painful.



## Important things to know about Dogs



- Dogs 'talk' all the time using their bodies, this is called body language. Dogs understand each other well but people often misunderstand dog body language or miss it completely.
- Every dog can bite, even the gentlest dog in the world is able to bite in the same way as even the most gentle person is able to get cross.
- Don't be frightened of your own dog just because you know they can bite. Learn how to tell if your dog is getting cross or scared long before they even growl so you can do something to help them feel better. Look at the Body Language leaflet for some pictures and advice on this.
- Growling is often a very clear warning that the dog is unhappy about something and their next move may be a bite if the problem doesn't go away. Stopping a dog from growling by telling it off stops any warning that they may be about to bite.
- Never tell a dog off for growling, instead walk away calmly from the dog and tell an adult who will hopefully work out why the dog growled and do something to help the dog feel happier in the future.
- Never force a dog to do anything. This means:
  - Not dragging the dog by his collar or lead.
  - Not dressing the dog up.
  - Not forcing him to meet another dog.
  - Not making him give something back, even if it is your favourite toy, get an adult to help instead using a toy or food to swap for your thing.

- Not forcing him to face anything he is scared of.
- Not making him move any part of his body, like lifting his tail, ears or paws.
- Not making him eat or drink something he doesn't want (unless an adult is giving him medicine).
- Never tease a dog - but what is teasing?
  - Making a dog jump or leap about for a toy and not letting him have it.
  - Getting a dog over-excited.
  - Prodding, poking, putting fingers into a dog's ears or mouth.
  - Pulling a dog's tail, or lifting it up.
  - Chasing the dog.
  - Anything that makes a dog fearful or uncomfortable (look at the Canine Communication leaflet).
  - Some adults tease dogs, this is still wrong so try to talk to someone you trust who doesn't tease the dog.
- Dogs need helpful friends, not bosses

Some people and some television programmes say that dogs need bosses but really all they need is to learn the rules and have friends who will look after them properly. Being cross with your dog will not make him better behaved but kind teaching and understanding will.

- Dogs don't know what is right and what is wrong, so we need to teach them. Learn how to teach your dog properly in training classes.
- Never make a dog feel unhappy or uncomfortable.

- Dogs don't like being squeezed and kissed because they don't like to feel trapped by people's arms and bodies. Even dogs that don't get out of the way, don't really like it. It can also be very dangerous as you have to put your face very near a dog's teeth to cuddle him. Learn how to stroke and groom your dog and how to train and praise him - your dog and you will enjoy it much more.
- Dogs need regular dog food and water.
- They shouldn't have chocolate it is very poisonous, so if your dog has some by accident do tell someone as it can kill them but it may take a few hours to take effect.
- Grapes and raisins and sultanas and currants are also very poisonous.
- Dogs shouldn't have sweets or anything that would be unhealthy for people, like chips or burgers. Dogs get bad teeth from sweets and they get fat from unhealthy food.
- Children under twelve should not take a dog out without adult help. Large dogs must be walked by someone physically able to hold them.
- If your dog enjoys something, they will do it again. So, if you throw the ball because the dog barks at you (maybe to stop the dog barking) that won't make the dog go away. He will just learn to come back and bark at you to get you to throw the ball again. There are lots of things like this you can teach your dog by mistake!
- Never put your hands or any part of you in between or near dogs when they first meet or are playing together.

- Never try to separate fighting dogs. Call an adult.
- Don't go into any dog's bed.
- Don't go near any dog when they are eating.
- Don't try to take any toy that the dog thinks belongs to him.

### When an unknown dog approaches you

Even when you have your own dog, other people's dogs and stray dogs may worry you.

Note to parents: the following advice is not guaranteed to stop a dog attacking but it should reduce the likelihood. If a child is for example bitten even when standing still, we can assume that the attack would have been worse if they had run away, since a dog can run faster

1. If you meet a loose dog, stand still and avoid looking at him. Cross your arms over your chest, keep still and stay quiet. This will tell the dog you are not scary and that you are very boring. Running away and shouting or screaming or crying will make you very interesting to the dog and he will want to chase you.

*Be a tree and fold your branches in.*

2. If a strange dog approaches you and starts to leap up, first of all drop anything you may be holding - like ice cream or a football.

3. Don't scream or shout as this will excite the dog more.
4. If the thing you were holding distracts him walk calmly away backwards so you can see the dog - don't run.
5. If the dog is still jumping up or you aren't holding anything, stand very still and don't make a sound. Cross your arms over your chest and don't look at the dog. This can be very hard but if you run the dog will chase. The dog should soon get fed up and go away.

*Be a tree and fold your branches in.*

6. If the dog knocks you to the ground, stay on the ground and turn over onto your knees, tuck them up, tuck your head and arms right in and under and wait for the dog to go away. Don't make a sound.

*Be a stone.*

7. If a dog chases you on your bicycle or skateboard or roller skates or anything like that, don't try going faster. Stop and put your bike between you and the dog and '*be a tree*'. Don't make a sound.
8. When the dog goes, move away slowly keeping an eye on the dog and find a trusted adult.