



DOGS AND CHILDREN

A dog can make a great addition to a family with children, but it is important to always actively supervise children and dogs together. Teach your children how to safely interact with dogs, including how to be respectful and when to give each other quiet time apart. These tips may be helpful when deciding to add a canine friend to your family.

Familiarize yourself and all family members with signs of stress in dogs, such as:

- 🐾 Cowering posture
- 🐾 Tucked tail
- 🐾 Lip licking (when they didn't just eat)
- 🐾 Showing the whites of their eyes (called "whale eye")
- 🐾 Heavy, excessive panting (when they aren't hot)
- 🐾 Excessive yawning (when they shouldn't be tired)
- 🐾 Eyes shifting back and forth very quickly

Teach your child(ren) safe behavior around dogs:

- 🐾 Stay calm; remember to use indoor voices and walk rather than run.
- 🐾 Always stay calm and relaxed while greeting a dog.
- 🐾 Slowly extend your hand to allow the dog to sniff before trying to pet; if the dog backs away, they probably want to be left alone for now.
- 🐾 No hugs or kisses, but gentle pets are good; dogs find hugs and kisses very scary.
- 🐾 Pet the dog gently with an open palm (no pulling or hitting).
- 🐾 Make sure a dog sees or hears that you're nearby, so they aren't startled.
- 🐾 Give a dog space while they are eating or sleeping.
- 🐾 Do not corner a dog or force them to accept petting.
- 🐾 Avoid direct eye contact (dogs find this rude).
- 🐾 Wait until dogs are finished playing together before interacting.

Positive ways for children and dogs to interact:

- 🐾 Play a game of fetch or a "find it" game with treats.
- 🐾 Pet dogs gently on their back or side, remembering not to pull on their ears or tail.
- 🐾 Let dogs know that you are approaching by talking to them and making sure they see you.
- 🐾 Even better—allow dogs to approach you first; this way you know that they would like attention.

Teach your child to never approach a dog if:

- 🐾 There is no owner present.
- 🐾 Your child is alone.
- 🐾 The dog is behind a fence.