



Dogs and kids can be the best of friends with the right training and some patience. Many dogs love children, some dogs hate kids, and most can be taught to enjoy them. The right introduction can make a big difference. Here are some tips for introducing dogs and kids:

- Before the dog is present, teach children the right way to pet a dog (gently) and approach a dog (not running, screaming, or flailing). When there is an adorable, warm, fuzzy animal there it might be harder for the child to listen and understand the instructions. Walk him through the introduction with the dog present.
- Before the dog is present, teach the child the right way to give the dog a treat (flat palm). If the child gets his fingers nipped giving a treat, he may start to act jerky or hesitant around the dog which could excite the dog. Make sure the child knows the dog isn't being mean, he's just excited about the treat.
- Reward the dog heavily in the presence of children. He'll learn to associate children with good things.
- Children can be very exciting or scary for some dogs. From the dog's point of view, they are often at eye level, move erratically, speak/yell loudly, and often have threatening body language (i.e. leaning over the dog, hugging the dog, reaching for the dog, being rough). Take the interactions slowly until your dog warms up to the kids, making sure to reward him for the right behavior and always provide a place to escape to if necessary. Reward the children for being gentle and calm as well.
- If the problem is that the kids are nervous around the dog, but the dog loves the kids, keep the dog leashed when interacting with the children. If the dog is on leash, the child always has the option to walk away. This will help him feel more confident. This might mean that the parent needs to go outside first to leash the dog before the child comes out or that you need to leash your dog before he comes in. The dog will act calmer if the child is confident rather than hesitant. Take steps to build the child's confidence.
- If the dog likes kids, have him on leash and ask him to sit. Let him sniff the child's hand and give him a treat if he remains seated. For some dogs, this should be done in a "down" position. If the dog is likely to jump up or paw at the child, have him lie down for greetings.
- When it's time to let them play together, choose games like fetch or hide-and-seek rather than chasing or wrestling games. This keeps the energy level slightly lower and doesn't encourage nipping, jumping, or biting.
- Make sure the dog has a safe place to go (i.e. crate) where the children know not to mess with him. Dogs get tired just like the rest of us and need to have a place where they won't be bothered. If not, they may snap or bite at the child to tell him to go away.
- Don't let the children bother the dog while he's eating or chewing on a bone.
- Have the children practice the dog's obedience exercises to help reinforce the dog listening to the children.
- Supervise all interactions between dogs and kids. Intervene whenever necessary to prevent nipping, chasing, biting, tackling, etc. Never let the dog or the child be harassed.



# PET TRAINING BEHAVIOR GUIDE **Pet to Child Introduction**



**For a child there isn't any other friend that is as safe and adapted as a dog is. There aren't any other domestic animals that have an ancestral orientation of play mates and protectors which is what dogs do for our children.**

- If you have a new baby, it's often a good idea to bring home a blanket with the mom and baby's smells on it for the dog to sniff. When mom comes home, have someone else hold the baby so she can greet the dog as he will likely be very excited to see her. Once he has calmed down, he can sniff the baby.
- It is best to make all changes to the dog's routine before the baby comes home. You should decide what will and won't be allowed (i.e. is the dog allowed in the baby's room) and start enforcing all rules months before the baby is born. If the dog tends to jump up on people, that needs to be corrected before the baby is born as well. Additionally, it is a good idea to teach the dog to respond reliably to verbal cues as your hands will often be tied up with the baby.
- Teaching the dog a "move" command to get out of the way will be useful when the baby starts to crawl. As with everything else, this should be taught long before the baby crawls and it's actually needed.
- A strong "Leave it" can be useful when the dog decides to eat food off the child's plate or hands. It can also be used if the parents don't want the dog licking the baby/child.
- Continue to make time for the dog and keep him well-exercised and mentally stimulated. Making changes to his routine early should ensure that any stress caused by the changes is long over with and not associated with the baby. Housetraining accidents may occur if the dog's usual schedule is forgotten; don't blame it on "jealousy". Set reminders to let the dog out, if needed, and try to keep his schedule as normal as possible.