

Kids and Puppies Together



We think of kids and puppies going together like peanut butter and jelly—a perfect pairing. But there are some significant challenges that come when you have puppies and younger children together. Here are some things that might help you keep everyone safe, calm, and happy.

Children 0-4 years: With very young children you will need to only have the puppy and child interact if a parent is actively involved. Do not ever leave younger kids and puppies alone

together or interacting without you being involved. They should only interact when the puppy is calm.

Children 5-8 years: With kids in this age range, you can have them interacting together when you are in the same room and supervising. They can start to have their own relationships, but it needs to be carefully managed. They can interact when the puppy is calm and playful, but the children must be calm too. No running together and no tugging games!

Children 9-13 years: Kids in this age range can have more one on one time with the pup and can participate in the management. Kids should be instructed on what to do if the pup gets over excited, mouthy, jumpy, or really anything other than calm and gently playful. Tug and running games *may* be ok depending on the puppy and the children.

Activities that children and dogs can enjoy together:

- Gentle petting when the puppy is calm.
- Reading stories to the puppy.
- Hiding treats or toys for the puppy to find.
- Training games with the help of parents. Sit, down, stay, and come are great to practice. Tricks are also fun.
- Come to sit round robin—a family training game.
- Putting the food bowl down for the puppy at meal times.

- Fetching using the two-toy method (until the puppy is trained to drop it and wait for a toss).
- Hansel and Gretel treat trail walks in the house or yard.
- Walks outside together with the parent holding the leash. (Children must stay with the puppy to avoid frustration which can lead to nipping, pulling, barking, and lunging.)

Children must also be taught to:

- Leave the puppy alone when he is eating, sleeping, chewing on something, or when he goes to his quiet place.
- Handle the puppy very gently when petting. Do not pick the puppy up unless they are old enough and have been taught how to do so.
- Never put their faces in the puppy's face and never hug the puppy.
- If the puppy starts to nip, mouth, or jump, children must stop moving and hold still, cross their arms and look away. Ask a parent for help.
- To always stop whatever they are doing and move away if the puppy growls. Tell the parent and get help from your trainer.

What if you have a puppy that is nervous around children?

- You will need to acclimate the puppy gradually. DO NOT ask kids to come up and pet your puppy to get him used to kids.
- Take your pup somewhere like a park with children playing in the background. Move your puppy as far away from the kids as needed for the puppy to be comfortable. Play with your puppy. Give them treats. Do some happy training. If children come up as ask to pet, please just tell them "Not now. This puppy is in training."
- As your puppy becomes less concerned, you can start to move them closer to the action.
- When your puppy becomes curious about children, ask the children to sit down and have the puppy go up to them. DO NOT have children give your puppy treats unless your puppy is already madly in love with them. You, however, can and should give your pup lots of good treats when kids are around!
- If your puppy continues to be worried about children please get in touch with us for help.

Following these simple guidelines will help everyone be safe, calm, and happy!!