



Kids and Dogs

Many of us grew up with a family pet. There is a lot more information available now to keep our pets and our kids safe. Always supervise children and dogs. Never leave a child unattended around a dog. Begin teaching your child at an early age how to safely interact with dogs both inside and outside your home.



Here are things that dogs wish children (and adults!) would learn:

- Leave dogs alone if they are asleep or resting.
- Leave dogs alone while they are eating or drinking. This includes: bowls of food, chew toys, and bones.
- Don't sneak up on a dog. A sideways approach is the least threatening.
- When interacting with a dog, let them come to you. Always ask permission to pet a dog.
- Do not enter a dog's crate or any other small confined space.
- Dogs may be hand shy, and reaching to pet a dog on their head may not be enjoyable for the dog. The side of the face or under the chin or chest is a place that most dogs would prefer to be pet.
- If the dog is not feeling well, or has a medical condition, they would like to be left alone. Imagine how you feel when you are sick, our dogs may feel that way but they cannot speak up. Always contact your vet if you suspect that your dog may have a medical condition.
- Do not grab tails or ears.
- Do not put your face up close to your dog's face.
- Do not climb on top or stand over a dog.
- Avoid yelling or screaming at a dog.

- Never tease a dog. Even staring directly into a dog's eyes can be perceived as a threat, especially if you do not know the dog.
- Contrary to the pictures being passed around on the internet, dogs do not enjoy being hugged! It is very intrusive to the dog, so please show affection by rewarding with things that your dog enjoys instead.

Body Language:

Being aware of what our dogs are saying is an important part of living with dogs. Most dogs display clear information, we just do not always know what to look for! Did you know that a wagging tail is not always an indicator of a positive experience? Depending on how fast the tail is wagging and what the rest of the body is doing, it could mean trouble. Keep in mind that some dog's physical features may make it more difficult to read. If ears are cropped or tail is docked, you can't read them! Below is information on dog body language. The more of one grouping, the less conflicted the dog may be and the easier it is to understand what they are saying.

Body language that indicates a happy dog / good experience:

- Loose wiggly body
- Soft eyes and eye contact
- Play bows- Back end is up, front end is down
- Playful vocalizations
- Loose, large, circular tail wags

Body language that indicates a dog who is not feeling social/ challenging experience:

- Stiff body posture
- Hard stares
- Low growls
- Baring of teeth
- Avoidance of other dog
- Tail tucked or high and stiff tail
- Stiff, fast moving tail wag

Stress signs include:

- Lip licking,
- Avoiding eye contact
- Sniffing, sneezing, licking, scratching and/or yawning out of context
- Tucked tail
- Cheek puffing
- "Whale Eye" When a dog turns their head away but eyes are turned to the side, showing the whites of the eye.

If your dog seems to be showing any of the challenging signs or stress signs, you should contact a behaviorist who uses positive training methods. They can work with you to determine the cause of

the behavior and how to manage and train your dog. Never punish a dog when they express that they are not comfortable. If the dog is punished, they will stop giving warning signals and resort to more drastic measures.



What Works:

- Training, such as attending a group class is a great way for your dog to learn and can be a family experience.
 - Use positive, reward based training methods
 - Plenty of physical and mental exercise
 - Take walks together. Walks are not a primary form of exercise but are a great way to build training skills.
 - Having consistency. Just like kids, dogs do better when the rules are consistent.
 - Trying to keep feeding and bathroom schedule the same. This will help with housetraining.
 - Time alone. Everyone in the house needs time to decompress, including the dog. Your dog can have time alone and enjoy a frozen stuffed Kong or favorite treat. Your dog may also need a break during hectic times, such as holidays. What we view as fun can be overwhelming to a pet.
 - Having your child be proactive in the care of the dog. This not only teaches responsibility, it builds a relationship between the dog and the child.



Training cues (in and out of the classroom):

Our staff can give you handouts so you can begin teaching your dog these important cues:

- Sit- Builds a solid foundation, can curb behaviors we don't like. For instance if a dog is sitting, they can't jump up.
- Stay- Perfect self-control exercise
- Down
- Leave it- Your dog will not understand that his dog toys are different from a child's toys. While management such as picking the toys up, is the best tool. Teaching a "leave it" will help too.
- "On" and "Off"- If your dog is on the couch, teaching the cue "off" is a much better way to move him than physically moving the dog.
- Recall- Teaching the dog to come back when called, because unfortunately, accidents happen and your dog may get loose.
- Leash walking

Bonding Activities:

Here are some great bonding activities that anyone can participate in (children with supervision):

- Hand feeding- Ditch the bowl and let your dog take food directly from you. This is the perfect time to practice
- Work on recall- Take turns calling your dog to come to you and reward him with treats when he comes back. Bonus points if he sits when he returns to you!
- Practice sit/stay or down/stay- Begin slowly, right next to your dog and gradually build longer time, distance or even a distraction such as you walking past your dog. This is an exercise that in which you don't want to do too much too soon. An easy start: Having dog sit/stay and count to five while standing next to him. If he can do this, say "good" and reward. Then try 10 seconds. Then try 15, and then 5 seconds again.
- Teach your dog his name- No REALLY, know their name. Say dog's name one time. When he looks, reward. Then move and repeat. This will help undo all of those times that he ignores you!
- Take a group class together. Be sure to find a trainer that is dog and kid friendly!
- Catch your dog doing something right! Is your dog calm and quiet? You're your dog a reward! Did your dog greet your child nicely? Reward! What you reward, the dog will repeat. Everyday training without cues is a fun way to achieve a well behaved dog
- Play this game with your dog: Touch paw pad for a second, reward. Touch collar, reward, pet dog's chest, reward. This will teach your dog that handling is a good thing! If your dog enjoys this, let the kids participate with supervision. If the dog is not comfortable, do not continue.

Other resources with great information:

Websites-

www.livingwithkidsanddogs.com

www.familypaws.com

www.dogsandbabieslearning.com

Books-

Living with Kids and Dogs... Without Losing Your Mind, 2nd ED by Colleen Pelar

EBOOK: Raising Puppies and Kids Together- A Guide For Parents by Pia Silvani and Lynn Eckhardt

Happy Kids, Happy Dogs by Barbara Shumannfang

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