

2. ANTICIPATE

Avoid risky situations. If your dog is shy, put him/her in a quiet part of the house before your 8-year olds birthday party. If your child is excited about a new toy (one that the dog doesn't realize is not his yet) consider crating your dog until you have time to teach the difference. If you have any feelings of doubt, listen to the inner voice that is saying "caution". Being proactive, not reactive will help.

3. FOLLOW-THROUGH

Often I hear "I can't stop my child from bothering the dog." My answer with compassion is "bull". If your child were harassing an infant, you would stop it immediately. Following through with both species is critical as a parent and role model. "Enough" or "Stop it," means just that.

Fair *boundaries and guidelines* are essential. Otherwise, keep them apart and schedule small, supervised play sessions. The dog is not the child's toy and vice versa. Children and dogs can make great companions but they need supervision. Both respond well to rewarding good behavior.

4. EDUCATE

Dogs are good at being dogs! To understand our world and culture, we need to teach them. Want your dog to be comfortable with kids near its food bowl?

Walk up and drop a delicious treat in its bowl while the dog is eating, then walk away. Do this without children around who may imitate you. If the dog wags its tail, great! If it freezes, growls or starts to aggressively gobble the food, don't push it. Instead, contact a local trainer or behaviorist for advice. Safely manage the situation.

5. RESPECT & ROLE MODEL

Going to have a toddler in your life? Prepare your dog now. When *no* children are around, using some treats, practice handling your dog. Drop some treats into the dog's bowl. Crawl into your dog's crate or sit near his bed. Observe reactions, particularly from adopted dogs. Again, if you are unsure, then seek advice from a professional.

Desensitize them to being touched. Gently tug the dog's tail. Massage your dog from head to toe, touching each body-part slowly and gently. Be mindful that jumping into a dog's face is inappropriate whether dog-to-dog or human-to-dog.

Teach "take-it / leave-it". "Drop-it" is one of my favorites for families with kids. This teaches the dog to drop something and keeps the wiggly hands away from the dog's mouth. Integrate Object Exchange daily: "here, take this treat and give me the ball."



Children & Dogs a S.A.F.E.R. Relationship

**Awareness
Education
Relationship
Well-Being**

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Supervise 🐾 Anticipate 🐾 Follow-Through 🐾 Educate 🐾 Respect & Role Model

By following a few simple steps, you can child-proof your dog and dog-proof your child. Approximately 160,000 children (USA) go to the emergency room every year for dog-related injuries. The good news is this number is less than accidents with toys, playgrounds, sports or parental abuse. Nevertheless, one bite is too many. Here are a few simple steps to follow beginning with:

W. A. I. T.

When greeting all dogs, be mindful that first and foremost dogs will be dogs. With desensitization, socialization and positive, integrated lifestyle training, dogs make wonderful family (and child) companions. However, they are still dogs, and dogs can and may bite! Most dogs perceive children under 12 as litter-mates, not human leaders of the pack that should be respected and/or treated gently. Many dogs will defend what they believe is their territory (backyards, houses). Dogs will respond to wiggly arms and excited giggles, as if responding to their own species and vocalizations (puppy-to-puppy and dog-to-dog). When greeting dogs, all humans should: WAIT: Wait, stand still with arms by your side. If a dog exits a yard or races at you barking, fold your arms, put them behind your back, turn sideways and stand still. Do not run, giggle, scream or jump and down. A big adult may be able to scare a dog enough to back off, but this is TOO DANGEROUS for children.

ASK: Ask for permission to pet (or touch a dog).

INVITE: This is the sniff test. Invite the dog to join you ... not the other way around. In dog-to-dog language or human-to-dog body language, it is considered poor manners to greet head-on. When meeting a dog for the first time, allow them to approach. Turn sideways and let them sniff your hand, when YOU feel it is safe.

TOUCH: After you take a deep breath, wait, ask for permission to pet the dog, invite the dog to come forward for a sniff (a closed hand or an open hand with a healthy treat works well), then it is okay to touch.

Most dog bites are a result of human error AND it can be prevented. Here are a few great tips to make it safer for both dogs and children.

1. SUPERVISE

Please, do not leave young kids and dogs unsupervised, particularly those under the age of 12. Dogs, especially puppies, see toddlers and kids as littermates, not pack leaders. Dogs are a different species. They communicate, play and rough-house in different ways than humans. In an idealistic and perfect (Disney) world, we want children and dogs to get along and have the ultimate respect for one another. In the "real" world this is impossible and unfair to both species.

A Mom learned this lesson when her daughter invited a friend over to play. Mom left the room for 5-minutes to return and observe her daughter's friend roughly sticking her fingers into the dog's eyes. Luckily, the dog tolerated this, but ...

should we expect our pets to put up with abusive behavior?

Intuitively, you know the answer to this. Absolutely not! Children need to be taught to respect other species and other cultures. These valuable [life sessions](#) will follow them into adolescence and adulthood, in careers, relationships and through life's journey.

Teach children & dogs behaviors that are positive and safe ...

Preparing your dog and children for safe and respectful interactions will keep them safe and you sane ...



A fenced yard and a supervised game of "dig in the sand, find your bone" is a safe interaction that teaches dogs where to dig and gives the child a behavior to teach.