

# INTRODUCING KIDS

## *To a New Puppy*

**K**ids and puppies have lots in common:

They're inquisitive, impatient, and easily excited! Which is why it's important to carefully supervise first encounters between a new puppy and your children. But the rewards are wonderful—a truly close bond and a lifelong love of dogs. Follow these 10 steps for a happy relationship.

✓ **UNTIL YOU'RE SURE**

that the puppy and the child know how to behave around each other you should be present. Stay in the background, but be observant and ready to step in if a situation looks like it's going wrong.

✓ **LET THE PUPPY NOSE HIS WAY TO THE KIDS,**

not the other way around. This can be very hard for children to understand. They can get excited when they see a dog and want to rush up and start petting it—which can provoke a reaction from the dog.

✓ **TEACH YOUR CHILDREN** that dogs



have zones of space that should be respected. There's a public zone, a social zone, and an intimate zone. You should not be in the intimate zone unless the dog has indicated that it's okay.

✓ **STUDY CANINE BODY LANGUAGE.** Like you, your child should know to stop play if she sees the signs of dominance.

✓ **ENCOURAGE PATIENCE.** Between eight and 10 weeks, a new puppy is in what's called a fearful period, as he explores the world. Combine that with the fact that both children and puppies are easily excited, and the result can be misunderstandings that place both on the defensive. Slow, patient

interactions leave room for everyone to learn what behavior feels fun and safe.

✓ **MODEL THE WAY** that you want your kids to approach their pup. Once they learn this at home, they'll understand the safe way to approach others dogs, too.

✓ **INCLUDE THE KIDS ON YOUR WALKS.** Your child will help you teach the puppy to obey and follow your and your child's lead. These early lessons will nurture and strengthen a healthy owner-dog relationship as both child and puppy mature.

✓ **HAVE YOUR KIDS HELP YOU TAKE CARE** of the puppy. Having a

dog is a great way to set rules for your children and teach them about responsibilities. Depending on the age of your kids, they should be able—and expected—to walk the puppy, feed him, and clean up after him.

✓ **KIDS CAN TAKE PART IN TRAINING.**

Both children and puppies learn by doing. One easy lesson is to clap gently for the dog to come. This is a personality test that trainers use to judge a dog's temperament. But it's also a nice introduction to the idea that he's expected to come when called. A puppy who comes running right away is likely more dominant; one who's initially shy but then accepts affection has a gentler disposition toward humans.

✓ **LET KIDS TEACH YOUR PUPPY TO FETCH.**

Crumple up a piece of paper, wiggle it in front of the puppy, and then gently toss it a few feet away. Your pup should go sniff the paper, and he may return it to the thrower after a time.