

## **Introducing your Puppy to Children**

*Children and Dogs are a natural combination, but children should always be taught to be gentle with puppies and parents should always supervise interactions.*

*All children past crawling stage can participate in puppy care in some fashion. A toddler can pick up puppy toys and put them in a box, help straighten puppy bedding, and learn to keep their own toys out of range of puppy teeth. A pre-school child can do these things and help fix puppy meals and accompany Mom and puppy to the Veterinary Clinic. A kindergartner can help teach the puppy to sit before he gets a treat and can help with leash training, and an older child can teach the puppy tricks and actively participate in good manners training under adult supervision.*

*A few cautions however, NO HUGGING. A puppy held close to a child's face can accidentally scratch or nip if it becomes frightened and tries to get away. NO DRAGGING. Kids should NEVER be allowed to drag a puppy around by the leg collar or leash. NO FEEDING FROM THE TABLE. Puppies and kids should be separated when food is around so puppies don't become beggars & thieves and so the kids do tease the pup with a tasty morsel ;) NO SPANKING. Children should never spank a puppy for bad behavior, and of course, adults should not spank the puppy either.*

*From the puppy's point of view, children can either be easy to intimidate or objects of fear. Children who run and scream can excite bold puppies into uncontrolled madness that includes growling & biting or can induce fear in shy puppies. Children who try to dominate puppies can have the opposite effect – rather than obey the child, the puppy can turn into a biter. Children who are afraid can also turn puppies into bullies.*

### **Provide A Safe Retreat**

Be sure your puppy has a canine sanctuary that's off limits to kids. Even pets that adore children need private time and a place to go that they know they won't be pestered. Make a bedroom or the puppy's crate and bed off-limits to the children, and supervise to enforce the rule if the children are too young to understand.

### **Teach Kids Limits**

Ask toddlers to practice petting a stuffed toy or the child's own arm or head. Young kids take time to learn that dogs aren't stuffed animals, and can be hurt and lash out from pulled tails or ears.

### **Practice Quiet Puppy Talk**

High pitched screams could potentially prompt puppies to be aggressive toward the child. Challenge children to a game, to see if they can talk in an inside voice that entices puppies to come near for pets. You can explain that just like children can get frightened of scary sounds, puppies can be scared and it takes very talented kids to know how to be pooch-friendly.

### **Ignore the Puppy**

Staring is a challenge in dog language that can stress some pets, especially kids that are eye-to-eye level. But when ignored, pups are more likely to be intrigued enough to investigate on their own. So challenge your toddler or older child to an "ignore the pup" game, and see how long they can pretend the puppy is invisible. In most cases, a confident canine will eventually approach.

### **Seat the Kids**

Puppies take turns playing chase-and-tackle games with each other, so when chased by toddlers they may get too rough without meaning to. So make it a dog rule that young kids must sit before they can pet the dog, and that the dog gets to approach. That also lets the pup to control interactions and move away when the puppy has had enough. Forcing a dog to sit still for a child's unwanted attention may cause the puppy to avoid the child in future. This instead makes it the dog's choice and a fun, rewarding experience. Once seated, the child can lure and entice the puppy with a toy. Playing builds a positive relationship that can grow into love.