



Are your children playing safely with dogs?

A parents guide on children and dogs

If there are young children in the family it is very important that the dog is friendly, relaxed, healthy, has some training and is well socialised. Most dog attacks reported to hospitals, doctors and councils occur in the dog owners' own home and occur to the dog owners' children or their friends.

Children should be calm and respectful to animals and interact appropriately with dogs and not 'play-fight' or play 'tug-of-war' games with them. Dogs can sometimes get over-excited or frightened if there is a lot of noise or when children are playing loud games and running around.

We understand...

...it's really everyone's responsibility to actively supervise, and teach children and dogs how to behave around each other.

Children and Dogs: the Fast Facts

When meeting or at play with a dog, children should:

- Never approach or go to pat unfamiliar dogs without asking the permission of the owner
- Never tease, hurt or provoke a dog
- Approach any dog slowly, hold out your arm, but keep it low with the back of your closed hand facing the dog
- Stroke dogs gently on the chest, shoulder or back, do not pat them on the head
- Stand still if being approached by a strange dog – try not to squeal or jump
- Avoid direct eye contact with an unknown dog – as it may feel threatened by this and react aggressively
- Never run and scream as this is prey behaviour and many dogs will chase as a game or as an attack
- Never touch a dog if it lifts its lips, bares teeth, snarls, growls, snaps or raises the hair on its neck or back.

We understand...

...it's best to choose your dog from a reputable registered breeder, association or shelter considering your family; finances; yard size; lifestyle and time for teaching and playing.



Being safe with dogs

Not all dogs like to be patted and cuddled. Ask the owner for permission first, then if OK, allow the dog to sniff the back of your hand. Keep your hand closed with your fingers tucked under. If it is happy to be patted, it will sniff your hand and move towards you. You can then stroke it from the neck to the tail. If the dog backs away and does not sniff your hand, it is telling you it does not want to be patted.

If you interfere with a dog that is eating, you risk being bitten. Dogs should not be fed by children from their own plates or from the dinner table. Also be aware that a dog may bite if a child goes near a bone or chew toy left lying around.

If the dog goes away to have a rest, don't disturb it. After a rest it will usually be willing to play again.

The role of parents

Teach children to be gentle with dogs and if they can't be actively supervised they must be securely separated. Any dog's behaviour can be unpredictable as can the behaviour of children.

Owner's responsibilities

Ensure that your dog is not put in any situation where it may behave inappropriately with children.

Jumping up on people is a common problem which can be discouraged with practice and training. Quietly turn your body away from the dog, do not make eye contact and keep your arms still at your side. As soon as your dog has four paws on the ground, reward it. With consistency from everyone who comes into contact with your dog, the problem of jumping up should quickly be resolved.

Ultimately, the owner is responsible for their dog's behaviour and the local council or the Police can take action, if a dog attacks a person or another animal.

Children and Dogs: a Good Owner tip

Dogs not used to being around children can appear to be fearful to others. When visitors with children arrive, confine your dog in a secure area. When everyone is comfortable and if your dog is usually friendly with strangers, it can then meet the guests.

To find the facts and other tips on how to be a good dog owner, visit dogandcatboard.com.au



An initiative of the **DOG AND CAT MANAGEMENT BOARD** and your local council. Council information and contact details can be located at www.lga.sa.gov.au View the *Dog and Cat Management Act 1995* along with Information Sheets on selection, health, behaviour and care at www.dogandcatboard.com.au