

Dogs & Kids: What Parents Should Know

Growing up with a dog can be a positive experience for children. However, if you are choosing a new dog for your family, keep in mind that not all dogs are compatible with children. **Careful planning is necessary.** Parents must invest the time to **teach the dog and the child acceptable limits of behavior** in order to make their interactions pleasant and safe.

Are you considering a puppy? If so, you may want to think twice. . .

- Puppies require a lot of time, patience, training, housebreaking, and supervision.
- They need to be taken places and exposed to new things and new people in order for them to grow to be well adjusted, socialized pets.
- **Do you have the necessary time to invest in your new puppy, in addition to caring for your children, who also require lots of time and care?** Although puppies can be a lot of fun, and it's exciting and rewarding to help them grow into wonderful companions, they do require *significantly* more time to train and supervise than an adult dog.

Choosing an adult dog

- Select a dog based on his temperament and individual characteristics, rather than on looks or breed type.
- Consider also how much time is required to maintain the dog (grooming, training, exercise, etc.).
- Make numerous visits to the shelter with your family to interact with the dog and learn as much as you can from the Staff Canine Behaviorist. He will assist you in choosing a dog who is tolerant, easygoing, friendly, happy, moderately active, and obedient.

Who will care for the dog?

- Remember that although you may be getting the dog "for your kids", **YOU will be the person who is responsible for your dog's care and training.** It's unrealistic to expect a child, regardless of age, to have sole responsibility for the care of a family dog.
- Teaching a dog the rules of the house and helping him be a good companion is too overwhelming a task for a young child. **You must be prepared and willing to be the dog's primary caregiver.** Not only do dogs need basic things like food, water, and shelter, they also need to be played with, exercised, and trained on a consistent basis.

Dogs & Kids: Think "Safety First" at all times!

- Dog safety education begins with you. Children do not understand that **all** dogs have the potential of biting someone.
- Do not encourage your children to approach strange dogs without the owner's permission, even though you may think that your child is already "good with dogs"!
- Also, even with your own family's dog, small children should never be left alone with a dog or puppy without parental supervision. This is for the safety of **both** the child and the pet, to minimize the chance of either being injured.