

Dos and Don'ts for Children

Most parents teach their children safety rules such as: Don't touch the electrical outlet, don't touch the stove, don't hit other children, cross the street only like this, and don't go with a stranger. Dog interactions also require safety rules. *Kids and their own dogs are in the highest risk category for dog bites.* And other dogs are everywhere: at a friend's house, in the neighborhood, at an in-law's house, at a soccer game. Your child is counting on you; so is your dog.

Do not ever leave a child, especially an infant, unattended with a dog, Babies and young children remind some dogs of prey; it is not safe to leave them unattended, even in a car seat, crib, or mechanical swing. Babies should not be on the floor with a dog. People commonly say that the dog "seemed fine" right before he killed or bit the child (see the Warning Signs page). Why risk it? For information on how to prepare your dog for the arrival of your baby, read Happy Kids, Happy Dogs: Building a Friendship Right from the Start.

Dos

Teach the correct way to show affection, respect and kindness to dogs each time you interact with any dog, including your own. It is your job as a parent and as a dog owner. Children may:

- Watch adults interact with, touch and greet dogs in the safe, correct way (see below)
- Help an adult teach or show off the dog's tricks (high five, spin, roll over, take a bow, go night-night, the list is endless!)
- Help an adult teach or show off the dog's obedience cues (sit, down, come, etc.)
- Under adult supervision, offer gentle, slow petting on the side of the dog's face and under the chin
- Kiss their hand and then slowly pet the side of the dog's face to "give" the kiss
- Play find-it games under adult supervision
- Help adult bake dog cookies
- Help adult groom the dog
- Help adult feed the dog
- Help adult fill the dog's water dish
- Feed treats while adult grooms the dog
- Help adult play fetch with the dog
- Help adult take the dog for walks (adult holds the leash)
- Sing quietly to the dog under adult supervision
- Count the dog's spots, feet, ears, tail, eyes, and legs under adult supervision
- Draw pictures of the dog

Don'ts

How many times would you tolerate inappropriate touch from someone? It is risky to expect a dog to tolerate inappropriate touch over and over, indefinitely. It is common for children and adults to touch a dog incorrectly until, after the dog's warning signs have been repeatedly ignored, they sustain an injury. It's usually a matter of well-meaning people not knowing the correct way to interact with a dog.

Do not allow your child to do any of the following, nor should you model the wrong behavior for your child. Doing so puts you or your child at risk with your dog or a friend's dog.

Hugging	Following the dog	Approaching a dog who is resting
Kissing	Chasing the dog	Approaching a dog who is on his/her dog bed
Pinching	Touching from behind	Approaching a dog who is sleeping
Poking (nose, eyes, or anywhere else)	Using the dog to help stand up	Approaching a dog who is eating or chewing anything
Wrestling	Lying on the dog	Approaching a dog who is chewing a toy
Rough play, horse play	Leaning on the dog	Throwing things at the dog, or in the direction of the dog
Running	Pulling or holding ears or tail	Hitting or kicking the dog, either slightly or roughly, or touching the dog with a foot
Screaming	Grasping at the hair coat	
Dressing the dog in outfits or hats	Pulling on the hair	
Disturbing or interacting with a dog who is in a crate or otherwise confined (in a car, behind a baby gate, tied outside a store, etc.)	Grabbing paws	
	Touching the dog with an object (like a doll, a stick, a spoon or a toy truck)	
	Blowing air at the dog	

The Right Way to Meet a Dog

- Breed or familiarity are not reliable indicators that a dog is safe to pet.
- Children and adults must always ask permission before approaching any dog, even a familiar one. Every time.
- If permission is granted by the owner, teach your child to look at the dog's paw, and to stand sideways with relaxed arms hanging down at his or her sides. "Be a tree."
- Do not extend hands for the dog to sniff. This is outdated advice. We now know reaching is a threatening gesture and can invite a bite. (Besides, dogs have powerful noses and can smell a person's scent beneath 100 feet of water, so there's no need to extend a hand.)
- If the dog does not approach to interact, do not touch. Instead, enjoy the dog by counting his paws, ears or spots on his coat. Admire the dog's collar or ask the owner about the dog. But don't touch.
- If the dog approaches, the best way to touch most dogs is with gentle strokes on the side of the face and under the chin. Do not pat the top of the head.
- Do not extend your hand towards, stare at, lean over, hug, or kiss any dog.
- When there are several kids present, they must interact with the dog one at a time only.
- When out with your dog or when you have visitors to your home, remember that most people don't know the proper way to greet a dog. Tell them that you want your dog to feel comfortable. Show them what to do with their body, their eyes, and their hands.

A child may be watching the interaction, so always model the correct way to greet a dog.