

Dogs and children

helping your child and dog live safely together

Dogs and children can develop wonderful lifelong relationships. However, even the gentlest dog may bite if they feel frightened, trapped, startled, unwell or repeatedly uncomfortable. By understanding how to manage interactions safely, we can help both children and dogs feel secure, comfortable and protected.



Did you know?

Most serious dog bites involving children occur within the home and involve a dog already known to the child.

HIGH-RISK SITUATIONS

Children should never approach a dog that is:



Eating



Chewing



Playing with a toy



Sleeping



Holding a stolen item



Resting with a favourite person

Even gentle dogs may protect valuable resources or react if startled.

EARLY WARNING SIGNS

Look for subtle signs your dog may be uncomfortable.



Turning away



Moving away



Lip licking



Yawning



Freezing



Whale eye



Growling



Lip curl



Snap

These behaviours are your dog's way of asking for more space.

COMMON MISTAKES

- ✗ Allowing children to disturb sleeping dogs
- ✗ Encouraging cuddling and hugging
- ✗ Taking food or toys away with a child nearby
- ✗ Punishing growling
- ✗ Assuming children can recognise if a dog is uncomfortable
- ✗ Leaving dogs and young children together unsupervised

Remember: don't expect children to manage dogs. Adults must manage the interaction.

TOP TIPS

- ✓ Every dog should have a child-free safe space
- ✓ Give dogs the choice to move away
- ✓ Adults should supervise every interaction
- ✓ Respect growling and other warning signs
- ✓ Teach children to leave resting dogs alone
- ✓ Seek professional advice early if concerns arise

Space, understanding and supervision keep children and dogs safe.

ACTIVE SUPERVISION

Being in the same room is not the same as actively supervising.

Active supervision means:



One adult supervising the child.



One adult supervising the dog.

If there has **ever** been concern about growling, snapping or anxiety around children, management should be put in place immediately.**

This may include:



Baby gates



Separate rooms



Indoor lead



Basket muzzle



Behaviour support

****Until a treatment plan is in place, children and dogs should not interact without active supervision.**



NEED MORE HELP?

Behaviour concerns are often easier to address when support is sought early. Did you know most pet insurance companies cover the costs of clinical behaviourists?



Dr Michelle Lord

Clinical Animal Behaviourist
PhD • CCAB • APBC

07944 577891
michelle@co-evolve.co.uk
www.co-evolve.co.uk



This resource has been produced by

Dr Michelle Lord and **Co-Evolve**

