

Dogs And Children

We all hope our much loved family dog is going to be friendly with everyone it meets and unless a dog is known to be people/child aggressive the chances are the dog will be fine.

But just because your dog is fine with people and children does not mean that other people's dogs are going to be. The dogs may not have been socialised and therefore not used to the sudden movements children make or the scream of excitement.

Dogs are animals first and like us can and do have their off days. They may not feel too well and prefer not to run about too much.

They may be off their food or the weather is hot and they feel irritable. Also we do not like everyone we meet and some dogs can take a dislike to some people without any apparent reason.

Below are suggestions to help everyone of all ages on how to approach a dog safely.

- ÿ Always ASK the owner of the dog if you may stroke their dog before trying to touch it.
- ÿ It is a good idea to allow the dog to approach you and avoid eye contact with dog initially (as eye contact may make the dog feel threatened) so that the dog can sniff you up and down. If the dog is happy then you can offer the back of your hand for it to smell you. If the dog backs off then remove the offer of your hand.
- ÿ Dogs **do not like their** space invaded by strangers however friendly the dog is. When a dog backs off it is giving a clear message '**get out of my space**'. So take note and back off. This applies if your own dog backs off from you too. The chances are if someone was to invade your space you would feel uncomfortable and threatened. It's the same for the dog.
- ÿ If a dog is tied up outside a shop or by a park play area or running free on a walk the chances are the dog is friendly. But again do not approach the dog without asking the owner first. It is polite to ask first.
- ÿ NOTE : Dogs which are tied up do feel more vulnerable due to the fact they are unable to 'flight' (runaway) if they are frightened. Hence the importance of resisting approaching somebody else's dog.

- ÿ When puppies or dogs are asleep and resting, 'let sleeping dogs lie'. They need to rest too.
- ÿ Sudden movements can startle dogs and frighten them. Ask/teach children to respect dogs and to try to be calm around them.
- ÿ When a dog has a toy or a bone regardless whether it is your own dog or not. Teach children NOT to try and take the bone or toy away from the dog as this is how bites can and do occur.
- ÿ Respect the dog owner who prefers you not to fuss their dog.
- ÿ DO NOT leave dogs and children together unattended.
- ÿ Puppies and dogs are not little people they are an animal first and then a dog. Remember to treat them with respect at all times.

Hope you find this helpful. There is a lot more information on 'children and dogs' on the internet and if you log onto the Kennel Club website www.kennelclub.org.uk there is a section on 'child safety around dogs' and an online interactive link called 'safe and sound' www.safeandsoundwithdogs.org.uk that parents and children can play together. But it is very good for just the adults to watch too.

Have fun and keep safe !

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