



ALLEN COUNTY

SPCA

YOUR COMMUNITY. YOUR SHELTER. YOUR PETS.

CHILDREN & DOGS

Living with a dog can be beneficial to children. The child will learn responsibility and empathy and dogs can enhance a child's self-esteem!

Below are some tips to help you and your child gain your new dog's trust:

- **Holding:** Have your child sit down when they hold the puppy. Puppies squirm and may get hurt if they fall out of your child's arms. Puppies may also become frightened and snap if they are not held securely. Giving treats will also help puppies to associate good things with being held. For larger dogs, let them approach you and your child. If you sit with the child in your lap, you can ensure that your child is gentle and doesn't get hurt.
- **Petting:** Children often want to hug dogs around the neck, but dogs can see this gesture as a threat. Teach your child to pet the dog under their chin rather than reaching over their head. You should also teach them to avoid staring at, or looking directly into your dog's eyes. For puppies, have your child offer the pup a chew while being petted. This way, the puppy will chew and teeth on the toy rather than your child's hands and arms.
- **Giving Treats:** Have your child give treats in an open palm rather than using their fingers. Children can become scared when dogs try to take treats from their fingers, so this is a good way for your child to learn how to feed the dog. You can place your hand underneath your child's hand to guide them.



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- **Supervising Play:** Children running, jerky movements, and high-pitched voices can be very stimulating for a dog, which may lead them to chase or jump on your child. Encourage your child to play quietly around your new dog until they become more comfortable with each other. Your dog also needs to learn what behaviors are acceptable and which ones aren't. However, most kids under the age of 10 are not able to carry out these procedures, so it's helpful to teach your dog "leave it" for when play gets too rough. Obedience training classes can be helpful when learning basic commands. Don't punish your dog for bad behaviors around your child because they may associate bad things with being with children.
- **Possessions:** Your dog won't know the difference between their toys and your child's toys until you teach them. Your child must take responsibility to keep their toys out of the dog's reach. If you catch your dog chewing on something they shouldn't, interrupt the behavior with a loud noise, then give them an acceptable chew toy and praise them when they take the toy in their mouth. Don't confuse your dog by giving them objects to play with that closely resemble things that are off limits. Dogs can also be possessive of their food, toys, and space. Although it's normal for a dog to growl or snap to protect these things, it's not acceptable. At the same time, children need to learn to respect their dog.



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