



Are your children playing safely with dogs?

A parents guide on children and dogs

If you have children, it's very important that your dog is friendly, relaxed, healthy, has some training, and is well-socialised. Most dog attacks occur in the dog owner's home, and involve the dog owners' children or their friends.

Children should learn to be calm and respectful to animals, and interact with them in a responsible way (avoiding play-fighting, or tug-of-war games that can excite or frighten a dog). Remember, dogs can get frightened when there's a lot of loud noise, or when children are running around and playing games, so it's important to learn the signs of a dog that's stressed.

We understand...

...it's really everyone's responsibility to actively supervise, and teach children and dogs how to behave around each other.

Children and Dogs: the Fast Facts

When meeting or at play with a dog, children should:

- Never approach or go to pat unfamiliar dogs without asking the permission of the owner
- Never tease, hurt or provoke a dog
- Approach any dog slowly, hold out your arm, but keep it low with the back of your closed hand facing the dog
- Stroke dogs gently on the chest, shoulder or back, do not pat them on the head
- Stand still if being approached by a strange dog – try not to squeal or jump
- Avoid direct eye contact with an unknown dog – as it may feel threatened by this and react aggressively
- Never run and scream as this is prey behaviour and many dogs will chase as a game or as an attack
- Never touch a dog if it lifts its lips, bares teeth, snarls, growls, snaps or raises the hair on its neck or back.

We understand...

...it's best to choose your dog from a reputable registered breeder, association or shelter considering your family; finances; yard size; lifestyle and time for teaching and playing.



Being safe with dogs

Not all dogs like to be patted and cuddled. Ask the owner for permission first, then if OK, allow the dog to sniff the back of your hand. Keep your hand closed with your fingers tucked under. If it is happy to be patted, it will sniff your hand and move towards you. You can then stroke it from the neck to the tail. If the dog backs away and does not sniff your hand, it is telling you it does not want to be patted.

If you interfere with a dog that is eating, you risk being bitten. Dogs should not be fed by children from their own plates or from the dinner table. Also be aware that a dog may bite if a child goes near a bone or chew toy left lying around.

If the dog goes away to have a rest, don't disturb it. After a rest it will usually be willing to play again.

The role of parents

Teach children to be gentle with dogs and if they can't be actively supervised they must be securely separated. Any dog's behaviour can be unpredictable as can the behaviour of children.

Desexing

Research shows that desexed dogs are less aggressive. From 1 July 2018, all new generations of dogs will need to be desexed (unless owned by a registered breeder, exempted on medical grounds or a working dog). For dogs born before this time, you should consider desexing your dog to reduce the risk of unwanted litters, the chance of developing certain cancers, and to reduce aggression.

Owner's responsibilities

You are legally responsible for your dog's actions. If your dog bites or attacks someone, they may be able to pursue a civil claim against you to recover medical bills or seek damages.

Children and Dogs: a Good Owner tip

Dogs not used to being around children can appear to be fearful to others. When visitors with children arrive, confine your dog in a secure area. When everyone is comfortable and if your dog is usually friendly with strangers, it can then meet the guests.

To find the facts and other tips on how to be a good dog owner, visit dogandcatboard.com.au



An initiative of the **DOG AND CAT MANAGEMENT BOARD** and your local council. Council information and contact details can be located at www.lga.sa.gov.au View the *Dog and Cat Management Act 1995* along with Information Sheets on selection, health, behaviour and care at www.dogandcatboard.com.au