

Kids and Dogs Safety Tips

The thought of having your child grow up with the constant companionship of the family dog can bring to mind images of the two of them sleeping under a tree together following an afternoon of playing fetch. And this sort of relationship is completely obtainable provided both are properly trained to understand and respect one another.

Media coverage of dog bites may terrify many parents and cause them to re-think their family pet. However, DOGS Victoria President Peter Frost would like to point out that these incidents can often be avoided if the dog is appropriately trained and a few ground rules followed by parents and children.

Mr Frost offers the following basic tips to dog-owning parents or parents considering the addition of a dog to their family.

“The most important rule is that no child under that age of five years should be left alone with a dog even for a moment,” advises Mr Frost. “Without realising it, children can trigger natural reactions in the dog that cause it to react to your child as it would to a puppy – a snap or loud bark that would simply put a puppy in its place can terrify and even physically harm a young child, whose skin is much more fragile than a puppy’s.”

“Ideally,” says Mr Frost, “You will have anticipated any changes the dog will face and got it used to them well before your baby arrives. This may mean confining the dog to certain rooms or outside only, keeping its toys outside or changing its feeding spot. If this is done early, it won’t associate the new baby with these disruptions.”

“If you’ve already brought the baby home, keep some treats with you at all times and reward the dog for basic good behaviour while changing, feeding, cuddling, and etc. so it associates you being with the baby as a rewarding experience,” Mr Frost explains.

“Teach older children to avoid screaming and running around the dog. It’s also a good idea to have a room or kennel for the dog only where it can go for peace and quiet. Make sure the children leave it alone entirely when in this safe spot.”

These are just a few of the many things you can do to make sure that in the coming years your dog and child have that idyllic relationship you dreamt of for them.

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A DOGS Victoria representative can be made available for interviews on a variety of topics including training tips, choosing the right dog, and general dog information.