



FOREVER HOUNDS TRUST

Matching greyhounds and lurchers to happy homes

www.foreverhoundstrust.org • 03000 111 100

Registered charity 1131399

Homing a dog with children (Fact Sheet 9)

Bringing a new dog home is incredibly exciting for all the family but can be a little overwhelming for any dog. This is a critical time and if incidents are going to occur, this is when they are most likely. The good news is that by implementing some simple measures, we can help dogs and children to have a safe and rewarding life together.

Before any dog enters a new home – whatever its age or background - it is important that parents put the following **'golden rules'** in place to help keep their children (and dog) safe:

The Golden Rules

When you first get home – your dog will have a huge amount of information to digest in the first few days and weeks. They may feel vulnerable and will need time and space to learn about their new environment, and all the people, things, sights, sounds, and smells they encounter. Some simple rules:

- Give your dog time to explore their environment on their own, without the children
- Do not allow children to cuddle, kiss, or smother the dog with affection
- Do not allow your dog and child to sleep together
- Do not allow children to force the dog to play or interact if the dog does not want to
- Do not allow excitable play between children and dog
- Do not overwhelm the dog with noise i.e. excited screaming – keep all interactions calm and measured

Never leave dogs and children unsupervised - just like us, dogs sometimes dislike having their space invaded, and even the most tolerant dog can have an off day or be feeling unwell.

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Dogs need space and peace and quiet sometimes – children (and adults) should give their dog space and recognise the physical signs which mean they have had enough interaction. A dog that walks away, gives a hard stare, raises their lip, growls etc. is asking for space. If we don't notice these subtle requests, a dog doesn't know why we are ignoring their messages and may feel the need to escalate their behaviour to make themselves clear.

Let sleeping dogs lie – children (and adults) should never disturb a dog when it is asleep and/or in its own bed – or what they may regard as their own bed i.e. a particular chair or sofa. **Never try to remove a dog from a bed or sleeping area by grabbing its collar.** If you want the dog to move, call it to you with the offer of a tasty treat or show them their lead – most dogs will automatically respond excitedly at the prospect of a walk and get down from wherever they are.

Telegraph your approach – if the dog is fast asleep and you/your child are entering their 'space', let them know you are coming by calling their name, talking a little louder than normal (not so much as to scare them), rattle their lead - whatever it takes, but do enough to ensure the dog is awake and conscious of what is happening before you or your child approach them. If your dog is deaf or hard of hearing, use vibration to alert them i.e. run a pole along the banister or door, stamp your feet etc.

Place dog beds somewhere quiet - place dog beds away from locations where children may need to step over the dog to get past it i.e. away from doorways or busy areas of the home. Studies have shown that many incidents take place when children jump over sleeping dogs. This may startle them awake and cause an involuntary 'snap' response in even the most tolerant dog.

Create a safe space - create a space where dogs and children can be separated for when supervision is not possible or when the dog needs some quiet time i.e. by placing dog gates around the home or using an indoor dog crate.

Move away now – children must know to move away immediately after a warning of any kind and to leave the dog alone. If your dog shows any signs of discomfort around a child, separate them and contact us immediately for support. If a dog feels the need to growl, they have already been uncomfortable for some time.

Trust your gut – if you instinctively feel something is not right with the interactions between your dog and child, the chances are you are right. Separate your dog and child and contact us immediately for support.

Please don't hug me – hugs and kisses are a human concept and completely alien to dogs. Find something your dog does enjoy, to do together. Encourage children to save their kisses and tight embraces for their teddies and you! Ask children to respect your dog's space and help keep everyone safe and happy.

Leave their food alone - children should never approach a dog when it is eating – either a meal or a treat.

Keep play short - if the child wishes to play with the dog, instead of invading the dog's space they should invite the dog into their own space i.e. by calling the dog to them. The child should be encouraged to keep the play short, and to end it with the help of an adult. If play persists beyond what the dog finds tolerable, they may feel compelled to find a way of ending it themselves.

Teach your child never to approach your dog when it is:

- Eating
- Sleeping
- Playing with its favourite toy or other favourite things
- Unwell, sick, or injured
- Blind, deaf, or just getting old and possibly less tolerant

DR SOPHIA YIN POSTERS – when you adopt a dog from Forever Hounds and have young children or visiting children, please make us aware of this and we will issue you with two posters at the time of adoption. Please put these posters up in your home, at your child's head-height, and encourage them to use these simple techniques to staysafe.

If you were not given a copy of these posters at the time of the handover of your new dog, you can download them for free from the links below:

[How kids SHOULD NOT interact with dogs \(PDF 378KB\)](#)

[How kids SHOULD interact with dogs \(PDF 238KB\)](#)

THE BLUE DOG PROJECT INTERACTIVE DVD FOR CHILDREN – this is an interactive game, with parents' guide, which teaches children aged between three and seven years of age how to interact safely with dogs. There were lots of articles and books intended to help parents guide their children before The Blue Dog Project came in to being but incidences of bites continued to increase.

The Blue Dog Project was pioneered by child educationalists, psychologists and canine behaviourists, and has been proven to have a significant impact on reducing these incidents by children learning for themselves how to interact safely with dogs.

The DVD includes various cartoon stories of a Blue Dog - blue because there are NO blue dogs (in reality, not description). The games engage the child, by asking them to respond to different situations involving the Blue Dog. If they make the wrong choice, the Blue Dog becomes growly, but if they make the right choice then the Blue Dog and child have a nice, positive interaction.

Forever Hounds strongly advise anyone with children of this age, to purchase a copy of this DVD and encourage their child/children to play the games before adopting any dog, from anywhere. You can find out more details about the Blue Dog initiative by visiting: www.thebluedog.org.

Other helpful information is available on the following websites:

<https://positively.com/dog-behavior/behavior-problems/fears-and-phobias/fear-of-children/>

http://www.learnwithdogstrust.org.uk/Assets/LWDT/resources/community-education/DogsTrust_BeDogSmart_Leaflet.pdf

<http://www.rspca.org.uk/adviceandwelfare/pets/dogs/company/children>

Forever Hounds has an established team of volunteers who are qualified behaviourists who can provide advice, guidance and support should you need any help in settling your new dog into the family home. If you need help please contact us on 03000 111 100.