



Children & Dogs

For dogs who have not had much interaction with babies and children it would be very beneficial to introduce them to some in a positive way. Family members, neighbours, going down to the local park. Make sure every interaction is positive and make sure the dog receives high value rewards for calm behaviour when children are present. They must sit politely if other people are rewarding.

We want to influence how a dog's brain relates to children, we want the dog to think, yes, I like them because I get delicious food when they are around and I am settled. If your dog is nervous of children you will need to move further away and wait until they seem relaxed before moving closer.

DO NOT ALLOW CHILDREN TO BEHAVE INAPPROPRIATELY WITH YOUR DOG OR ALLOW THEM TO CHASE HIM IF HE IS AFRAID.

If you are bringing a new puppy or dog into the home there are some key points that you should be aware of to ensure good socialization between your dog and children whilst also ensuring both the dog and your children are safe:

- NEVER leave a dog and child together unsupervised! This is the number one rule that should never be broken. All it can take is a rough pat or an incorrect look for your dog to become suddenly uncomfortable and defend itself through a quick nip or bite. At the end of the day even if it was not their fault initially a dog can do damage to a child and inevitably will bear the blame.
- Learn to read your dog's body language and know when to step in. If you are supervising play and see that the dog is showing signs of being uncomfortable such as moving away from the child, yawning, licking its lips, turning its head away, pinning its ears back or you can clearly see the white of its eye you need to stop interaction immediately as this dog is not comfortable!
- Teach children how to correctly interact with dogs, to be calm, quiet and gentle around the dog. If they cannot follow these rules then they cannot interact with the dog. Playing with the dog is a reward for the child and they cannot abide by the rules they cannot have the reward.



- Teach safe games the child can play with the dog, ie there should be no games that involve wrestling the dog or interacting with hands only. Teach the dog fetch so that the child can throw a toy for the dog.
- Be aware of your child's capabilities dependant on their age and use the below as a rough guideline for appropriate dog/child interactions:
 - 0-3 years – interaction should only occur with either the dog or the child in a play pen for extra safety and constant, close supervision, monitoring both the child and the dog.
 - 4-7 years – the dog should be on lead and interaction should only be allowed with adult guidance and involvement. The child and dog should not be interacting alone.
 - 7-12 – Constant close supervision is required however the child can start to play games with the dog or do some training.
 - 12-15 – Dependant on the child's maturity level they can play games and train the dog with constant to moderate supervision.
- Allow the dog some quiet time and a safe place to hide away if it needs a break from the child. A crate serves as a great way to provide space and security for the dog as well as ensuring the same for your child.

Human Body Language

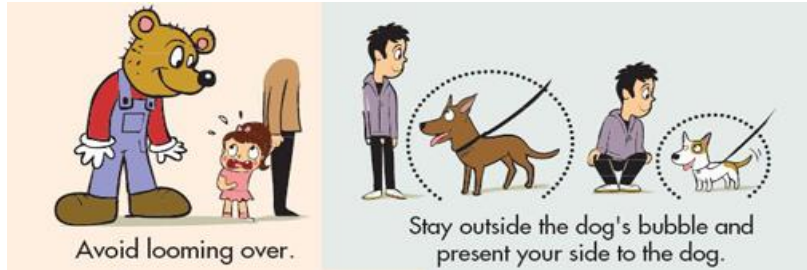
Dogs speak Dog, NOT English! They have adapted to living with humans by learning to communicate with us through body language.

Through thousands of years of domestication, they are so adept at reading even the slightest cues that we give. A lot of dogs have learned to 'tolerate' impolite human body language, but some dogs are too scared to handle these human mistakes.

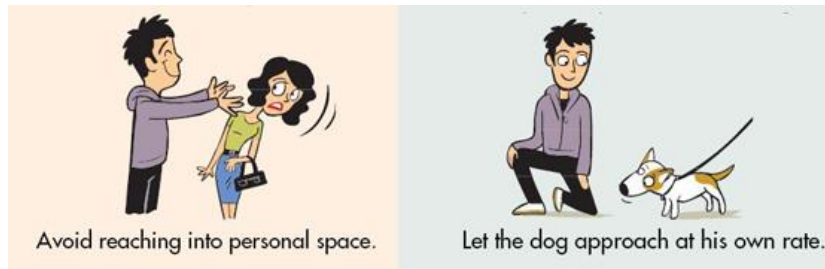
To guarantee the safety of all and to maintain a mutually enjoyable relationship, we need to ensure that we are giving friendly and inviting body language when interacting with our dogs.

As humans we should:

- Avoid leaning over



- Respect their personal space



- Do not rush up or surprise them.



- Avoid eyeballing



- Avoid smothering the dog



- DO Speak to your dog in a calm manner and avoid shouting. ✓
- DO Use singular words and signals ✓



- DO Encourage interaction with inviting, side on body language ✓
- DO Stay relaxed and confident ✓

You need to remember that your pet reacts to situations, you and the environment. We need to provide them with a great role model – YOU. If you can remain calm, relax and use your body language with simple words that your dog has learnt to understand will find that they follow. Dogs are great mimics and if you can lead by example then your dog will feel relaxed and comfortable in your company.