

# Children and Dogs Together

Living with children and dogs can be rewarding all around: kids learn about being responsible for another creature and considering their feelings and thoughts, and the bond that kids and dogs form can be very strong. The whole family can benefit from living with pets. But kids and dogs (or any animals) aren't automatically going to know how to get along; it's up to parents to make sure that the relationship goes well.

## Choosing a Dog

It is always important to consider what you're looking for in a dog before you bring one home, but that is especially true when there are children involved.

See the Associate of Professional Dog Trainers (APDT) for more information about selecting a dog for a family with children <https://apdt.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/children-and-dogs-1.pdf>

## Should you get a puppy or an adult dog?

Puppies and children have a lot in common: they both have lots of energy and learning to do. Puppies need supervision and socialization, housetraining, exercise, and lots of practice to learn good behavior. Taking care of a puppy at the same time you take care of young kids can be overwhelming, and often means that the puppy's early socialization and training are sacrificed – which can mean big problems later.



## Additional Resources

Please contact our Behavior Team to speak with a skilled behavior specialist.

[BehaviorTeam@spca.org](mailto:BehaviorTeam@spca.org)

214-461-5169

[www.spca.org/petuniversity](http://www.spca.org/petuniversity)

Look for the following books online:

*Living with Kids and Dogs* by Colleen Pelar (<http://livingwithkidsanddogs.com>).

*Raising Puppies and Kids Together* by Pia Silvani, Lynn Eckhardt, and Lori Eckhardt

Puppies younger than 5 months have sharp teeth and claws and don't yet know how to play gently. They're also fragile themselves. Puppies and children need to be supervised 100% of the time so that neither gets hurt.

Adult dogs, while they need our time and training to make the transition to a new home, may fit into a household faster especially if they are already used to living in a home with children.

At the SPCA of Texas, we can help you pick out a dog whose personality might make them a good match for your family.

### **What breed of dog is best?**

Taking into consideration the breeds characteristics is a helpful guide in finding a dog that will fit best with your family and your lifestyle, but in every breed, you must consider the individual dog's personality. Look for:

- Friendliness with people of all ages
- Tolerance for noise and physical handling
- Willingness to share toys and food
- Ability to stay calm and regain their composure in exciting situations

Generally speaking, very small dogs aren't a good match for young kids; they are physically more fragile than larger dogs and don't often tolerate kids' activities and handling well.

Larger dogs that have been bred to work with a variety of people, such as retrievers, can be a better fit for a family. Herding dogs, such as Border Collies or Heelers, sometimes herd children, chasing them and nipping at them. Protective breed types can also have trouble with children, especially if they haven't been socialized with them from a very early age.

### **Safety and Supervision**

Young children and dogs can never be left alone together. With an adult present at all times, you can make sure children and dogs are treating each other appropriately.

For more information about behavior and training, visit our website [www.sPCA.org/petuniversity](http://www.sPCA.org/petuniversity)