


# Puppies & Kids- Setting Everyone Up for Success

There's nothing sweeter than a child and their dog growing up together. But while the bond can be magical, it's not automatic. Puppies and kids both need *consistent guidance* to develop a relationship that's safe, respectful, and positive—for everyone involved.

This guide is designed to help you create a successful, low-stress environment where your puppy and children can thrive together.

## 🧠 Start with Realistic Expectations

Puppies are not born knowing how to behave around children—and most children don't naturally know how to interact with animals safely. Puppies bite, jump, and chew. Kids squeal, run, and hug tightly. Both are learning. It's *your* job as the adult to bridge the gap through supervision, structure, and coaching.

## 👨‍👩‍👧 Step 1: Prepare Your Kids Before Puppy Comes Home

✔️ **Talk about what puppies are like-** Let kids know puppies will nip, chew, jump, and may not like hugs or being picked up. This is normal—not mean!

✔️ **Practice gentle interaction rules**
Teach:

- "Let the puppy come to you."
- "Pet with one hand only."
- "No picking up the puppy without help."
- "No yelling, chasing, or teasing."

✔️ **Create a family "puppy plan"-** Outline who will help with potty breaks, feeding, and quiet time. Make it fun—but emphasize responsibility.

## 🐶 Step 2: Supervise Every Interaction

Until your puppy is well past adolescence, **supervised time is non-negotiable**. Even the gentlest puppy can nip too hard, and even the kindest child can overwhelm a dog.

✔️ **Use barriers and structure**
Crates, playpens, and baby gates create safe zones for both the puppy and the child. This allows *time apart*, which is just as important as time together.

✔️ **Keep early sessions short**
Start with 5–10 minutes of play or petting, then give the puppy a break. End on a positive note to build confidence and trust.

✔️ **Step in early if either gets overwhelmed**
Signs it's time to pause:

- Puppy starts biting, zooming, or growling
- Child gets scared, frustrated, or overly excited
- Either one starts trying to escape or avoid

## 💡 Step 3: Teach by Modeling, Not Just Telling

Your kids are watching how *you* interact with the puppy. Show them how to:

- Greet the puppy calmly (no squealing or rushing)
- Redirect biting with toys
- Offer treats for calm behavior
- Respect the puppy's body language
- Speak gently and move slowly

Turn these into games or "training missions" for younger kids to make learning fun and memorable.

## 🧒 Step 4: Kid-Specific Boundaries for Safety

To keep everyone safe and happy, we recommend the following:

🚫 No unsupervised time together
🚫 No hugging, straddling, or pulling on the puppy
🚫 No taking toys or food from the puppy's mouth
🚫 No punishment or yelling at the puppy—ever
🚫 No chasing the puppy or roughhousing
✅ Yes to calm petting, gentle games, and short training sessions
✅ Yes to praising the puppy when they choose calm behavior around children

> 🧠 *Important:* Rough play encourages rough behavior. What seems cute at 10 weeks may not be fun at 75 lbs.

## ⏳ Step 5: Understand Development and Maturity

Puppies are excitable, clumsy, and naturally mouthy—it takes **months of training and maturity** before they learn to interact calmly with children. This is normal.

- Biting doesn't mean the puppy is aggressive.
- Growling is communication—not something to punish.
- Puppies need rest as much as play—overstimulation leads to nipping.
- Plan for daily "quiet hours" where your puppy is crated or resting in a separate space away from kids.

## 🐾 When Things Go Wrong

Even in great homes, mistakes happen. If your puppy nips, growls, or reacts poorly to a child:

- Stay calm. Don't scold—this can increase fear or arousal.
- Redirect the puppy to a toy or calm space.
- Review what led up to the moment—was the puppy tired, overstimulated, cornered?
- Revisit supervision, structure, and boundaries.

If you're unsure, reach out. A professional trainer can help you get back on track quickly.

## Final Thoughts

With the right guidance, kids and puppies can build a lifelong bond rooted in respect and trust. But it takes **active adult involvement** to shape that relationship in the early months.

Be patient. Be consistent. And don’t forget to celebrate the sweet, silly, and heartwarming moments that make this journey so special.