

For Toddlers and their Caregivers - Top Tips

Toddlers are unpredictable and they are not aware yet, of the consequences of their actions

They can poke, hit, sit on, jump on, tightly cuddle, shout, screech and follow your dog around. They don't yet realise that your dog is a living, breathing, thinking, feeling animal, just like they are. So it is your job to teach them this, and to manage how they behave around dogs.

Make sure your dog can escape your toddler and set up safe zones where he can retreat to, to eat, sleep, rest, without being harassed by your child.

Put time and effort into teaching your toddler how to touch your dog correctly

Practice on a cuddly toy first. Stroke using a flat hand on the shoulder. Help them to stroke, with your hand over theirs. Help them to stroke down or back, but uncurl their fingers as you go. Praise your child once they are stroking with a flat hand.

When the child 'gets it', let them do it with your real dog. As long as both the child and dog are comfortable with it. And as long as your dog likes to be stroked (some don't), and is comfortable around the child.

Dogs do not like to be patted on the head, loomed over from the front or hugged tightly.

Teach your toddler to throw toys and teach your dog to drop them

Fetch, is a simple and pleasurable way to interact, for many dogs and kids. When toddlers reach about 3yrs, they tend to love throwing stuff. So, creating a way for your child and dog to co-exist and get pleasure from one another, is key to developing a great future friendship.

This quality playtime, will also lessen the chances of your toddler focusing on your dog at other times.

Never leave your toddler and dog together, unsupervised. If you cannot supervise, then separate.

Use baby gates and pen off zones. If your toddler is moving about, give your dog a safe zone where he can check out other things that are not available to your toddler.

