

# Teaching a Child to Be Gentle

This is so important, but so many parents don't notice how rough their children are. A gentle hand will carry them through so many different situations in life, not just meeting animals.

When your child approaches a dog, show them how to pet "gently". Don't let them pull on ears or fur, but a gentle rubbing of the fur, or feeling of the ears is okay. Don't let them squeeze handfuls of fur, and make sure they know that a tail is not handhold. If your child has a normally heavy hand, don't use a real dog for the first time, use a stuffed animal. A dog might not be as patient with grabbing hands as you would think.

## **The Right Approach**

This is very important! From the time they first understand, you must teach your children how to approach a dog properly! What is the right way to approach a dog? Approach his owner first and ask permission!

Saying "Hello" After Permission is Given (From the owner. But Look at the dog first to make sure the dog wants to say Hi!. If not don't do any of the next just move along your way.) Approach slowly, do not run up to a dog, ever. Hold your hand out, palm down, and let the dog sniff you. Let him decide how close he wants to get. Many dogs love attention, but the first few moments of every new meeting is critical. **A correct approach will likely have the new dog sidling in closer for hugs and kisses.**

## **Fear Factor**

Please don't bring your children up to fear all dogs, even if you do. A child who was taught fear will react to a strange dog in a way that may make the situation even worse. Teach them to respect dogs and all other animals instead. Respect their boundaries, not run from them.

## **Meeting A Strange Dog With No Owners Present**

It is very important to keep a cool head during these moments. Do not do what your instincts may tell you to do. The first instinct is often "scream and run", please do not do this. Instead, using a loud, firm voice, tell the dog to "go home". If he doesn't leave, don't panic.

What is he doing? Is he just watching you, curiosity in his posture (ears perked, tail wagging, relaxed stance)? If this is how he looks, just walk away calmly. Again, do not run.

***Is he standing in a threatening manner?*** Ears laid back along his head, his body tense, his

tail up (may or may not be wagging slowly, don't be fooled): this a threatening posture. Tell him to "Go lay down" in a firm voice, do not yell, do not scream. Any sudden move on your part may trigger an attack. Start to walk away slowly. Do not make any sudden moves. If he starts to advance on you, and lunges, drop into a "turtle" position, and yell for help. Parents, if you come across your child in this position, do whatever you have to do to get the dog away.

### **Never Run Away From A Dog**

Running will only trigger a "prey" response, and a dog that may have been content to sit and watch will suddenly chase. Even a dog whose only intent is to "play" may cause devastating results when the "prey" is caught.

### **Never Approach a Dog When He is Eating**

Parents, this should be common sense, every child should know this, whether you have pets in the home or not.

Dog Owners, if your dog is food protective, please take the time to train him out of it. Look for [Object Exchange](#).

### **Parents! Never Leave Your Child With a Dog Unattended!**

Accidents happen in the blink of an eye, and even the gentlest family dog will bite if he is in pain, or if he has just "had enough".

Parents, please don't hesitate to call animal control if a loose dog ever threatens you or your child. Loose dogs are a menace, and irresponsible owners should be held accountable. Dog owners that do not care where their dog goes and what he does should not be dog owners, period.