Top tips for your kids

Share these tips with your children and practice what to do in the following situation:

If a dog is chasing you it may be because they are interested in what you're holding. Throw whatever you are holding to the ground.

If the dog is not distracted by what you may be holding stand still and upright, look away and tuck your fingers and thumbs in and cross your arms over your chest.

If a dog knocks you over, make like a hedgehog and curl into a tight ball covering your face and head with your arms and stay like this until an adult arrives or the dog goes away.

If you have any concerns about your dog's behaviour or would like further advice, contact the practice .

Information provided by Dog's Trust UK

Consulting Times

Hillock Lane Surgery

Monday to Friday
8.30am to 6.30pm

Saturday
8.30am to 1pm

Blackpool Surgery

Monday to Friday
8.30am to 6pm

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Hillock Lane

Blackpool

Be Dog Smart

Dogs & Children

Helping your children to learn about dogs and stay safe

Rowan Veterinary Centre

"where pets come first"

Hillock Lane
Freckleton
Preston
Lancashire
PR4 1TP
01772 639800

The Old Bank
369 Whitegate Drive
Blackpool
FY3 9PH
01253 766352

www.rowanvets.co.uk
admin@rowanvets.co.uk

Why have a dog?

Dogs and children can be great friends and having a dog can help children develop kindness, understanding and respect for living things. Pets can improve a child's social skills with people and caring for a pet can encourage responsibility.

Because of this, many families have dogs. Children will quickly learn to treat your dog as part of the family but it is important that you teach your child to stay safe around your dog so that both of them are protected.

Growing up with a dog may also improve a child's social skills with people and caring for a pet encourages childhood responsibility.

Many dogs are considered to be a part of the family and children quickly understand that concept. What children might not understand is that dogs are a different species.

Children tend to treat pet dogs as their peers; they hug them, try to cuddle them, pick them up and scold them. Children express their affection for their family and friends through very close facial contact, often kissing. Much of this is exactly the opposite to dog social behaviour and your dog may find it threatening. Children, especially toddlers, are still quite clumsy and can inadvertently stand on feet, tug ears, hair or tail. They can also fall on top of and/or hurt a dog.

From a dog's point of view, children communicate very differently to adults. They cry, yell, shriek, crawl and run about unpredictably. It is not surprising that dogs find it hard to understand children and even harder to tell them when they want to be left alone. For these reasons, young children are far more likely to be bitten than any other population group.

Research also shows that people are far more likely to be bitten by a dog owned by their own family than an unfamiliar dog. This means that children are in the highest risk group of being bitten by their own family dog.

For these reasons, children should:

- Never be left alone in the same room as a dog.
- Only be allowed close contact with dogs under competent adult supervision.
- Never be allowed to approach an unfamiliar dog or one that you do not know to be friendly towards children.

Dogs should always have a "place of safety" to retreat to if they need to get away from a child. If that is their bed, then children should be taught never to approach the dog in their bed and supervised to ensure that they don't.

Teach your children never to approach your dog when, for example, your dog:

- Is eating or has food.
- Has a toy or possession.
- Is sleeping.

- Is sick, injured, in pain or even just tired.
- Has impaired vision or hearing.

Understanding your dog's behaviour

It is good to be able to understand and recognise what your dog is feeling. Recognising and understanding these gestures can allow you to respond to your dog appropriately.

Dogs communicate mainly through body language and they have a wide range of behaviours to communicate how they are feeling. They will use these gestures to stop whatever is happening and this is why it is important that dogs are always given somewhere quiet to go to e.g. their safe place. When they are there, they should be left alone.

If these gestures are ignored then they may escalate to other more active signals of communication which include:

- Baring their teeth.
- Narrowing their eyes.
- Raising the hairs on the their neck and back.
- Shifting their weight to allow escape.
- Growling or snarling.
- Barking or snapping.

If you are worried about the behaviour of your dog, or your dog displays any of these signs around your children, please seek advice from your vet who may refer you to a behaviour expert.