

5 tips for introducing children

TO PETS



NEVER LEAVE UNATTENDED

Accidents can easily happen when children are left alone with pets, either resulting in injury of the child or the pet. Ensure encounters are always supervised for the safety of both child and pet.



INVOLVE YOUR CHILD

Include your child in the daily tasks of caring for the family pet. Taking them for a walk, cleaning up after them, feeding them and more can stimulate a sense of responsibility in your child. This supports healthy human-animal bonds in your home which helps children and pets have healthy and safe relationships life-long.



PROVIDE A PLACE FOR YOUR PET TO ESCAPE

Teach your pet early on that they have a safe space they can go if they are overwhelmed. This can be a kennel, a separate room, a dog house, or just a special space in the house with a soft blanket or bed. Allowing them to retreat to this space if they are uncomfortable can help prevent accidents such as bites and scratches. Just as the pet needs to know where this space is, children and others in the home need to be taught to leave the pet alone if it is in this special space.



POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT

Teach your child to reward positive behaviour in your pets. Rewards can include treats, petting, or encouraging words. Doing this allows your child to focus on what the pet is doing well rather than punishing bad behaviours. This is important so that dangerous interactions such as bites can be avoided.



TEACH GENTLE HANDLING

Children can have difficulty understanding how gentle to be when handling an animal. Adults in the home should avoid rough handling so that children do not learn these behaviours, which can lead to bites, scratches, or injuring the pet. Demonstrate how to safely and gently stroke the pet, and how to hold them to avoid dropping or hurting them.

