



## Dogs and children

**Please read this information carefully. The information it contains is essential reading if you have children, but if you have visiting children, you should be equally familiar with the advice on how to keep dogs and children safe.**

KGR does not rehome greyhounds to families with children under the age of 8, unless the dog has been thoroughly assessed in a foster home. If you are rehoming a lurcher and your child is under 10 years old, we will also have assessed your dog in a foster home. You will need to have had some experience with dogs. In the foster home we will have tested the dog to ensure – as best we can – that the dog has a good temperament and is child friendly.

A lot of rescues will not rehome dogs to families with children because even a fully assessed dog can:

- Have a fright and react in an unpredictable way;
- Be pushed to the limit of its patience by a child, usually because boundaries are not being enforced by the parent;
- Be awakened from a deep sleep or a bad dream and react in an out-of-character way.

Dogs are sometimes returned to rescue centres (or relinquished to rescue centres) because they have snapped at a child. They are normally not bad dogs, but are nevertheless labelled aggressive and can be put at risk. In fact, it is usually because parents have not enforced boundaries, or they have not organised their home so that young children and dogs can be kept separate when they are not being supervised.

**By ‘supervision’, we mean actively paying attention to the interaction between your child and dog, not listening from upstairs, working at a desk in the corner or reading on the sofa. You need to take responsibility for the interaction between the dog and the child because the child does not understand.**

It is up to you now, **the parent**, to enforce the simple rules of children living happily with dogs. We have discussed this with you.

KGR expects the following:

1. You must actively supervise your child and dog when they are together.

2. When you cannot actively supervise the interaction between the dog and your child you must not leave your dog and child alone. Leave your dog in a room you don't use all the time, preferably with a gate across the door<sup>1</sup>, or a crate tucked into the corner of the living room / kitchen. Your child must follow instructions to leave the dog where it is. This space will also be essential if you have visiting children. Excited kids playing with an excited dog must be avoided - the dog should just be put out of the way, in the room or crate you have organised for that purpose.
3. Your child needs to understand that if you say no, to whatever he or she is doing with the dog, you actually mean no and they need to stop immediately. No excuses.
4. You must attend a training course with the whole family even if it clashes with bedtimes, or meal times. If there are no suitable classes that will welcome your whole family, then you must arrange private sessions at your home.
5. You must ensure your dog has a quiet place to sleep where it will never be disturbed. Your child must be able to always keep to this rule. Children must never suddenly wake a sleeping dog - greyhounds can often sleep with their eyes open and appear to be awake. If your dog is asleep, or in its bed, your children need to respect the dog's space - a dog is not a toy.
6. You must train your dog to stay off the sofa and beds. The dog should be resting in its own bed, where it will not be disturbed. You may need a bed in more than one room.
7. You must feed the dog alone, where he will not be disturbed by children. At your training sessions, your child will learn how to give your dog treats in return for a behaviour - like a sit, or a stay. You must ensure your child does not eat near the dog until he is trained with food manners.
8. You must teach your child how to play safely with your dog. It is essential that you seek advice from your trainer because all dogs are different. For example, squeaky toys can be too exciting for some greyhounds and lurchers. Teach your child not to take toys from the dog, not to sit on the dog or pull his fur and not to follow the dog if he moves away.
9. Do some research and ask your trainer about dog behaviour. Dogs use lots of signals to tell us they are not happy and it is good to know what these are and what they mean. It is clear that a growl means that the dog is extremely unhappy or uncomfortable and the

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<sup>1</sup> Most dogs will not enjoy a closed door when the family are in the house and the gate also means that no one is surprised by an excited dog when the door is opened.

particular interaction needs to stop immediately, but a dog will normally have told you he is worried or uncomfortable before he growled. For example, he may have licked his nose, or yawned or moved away. He may have tucked his tail under, or his body may have become stiff. Learn what your dog is trying to tell you.

### **Make sure you make time for dog**

You need to exercise your dog properly, even if your children are keeping you busy. It is not appropriate to think a slow walk to school with a young child is exercise – it's not! Making sure your dog is exercised and tired will make it easier for him to stay calm and rest when you are looking after the family and not playing with him.

Put the time in with your training sessions and let your children join in. Investing in training makes everything easier.