

Children & Dogs

Living with children and dogs can be rewarding all around: kids learn about being responsible for another creature and considering their feelings and thoughts, and the bond that kids and dogs form can be very strong. The whole family can benefit from living with pets. But kids and dogs (or any animals) aren't automatically going to know how to get along; it's up to parents to make sure that the relationship goes well.

Should You Get a Puppy or Adult Dog?

It is always important to consider what you're looking for in a dog before you bring one home, but that is especially true when there are children involved.

Puppies and children have a lot in common: they both have lots of energy and learning to do. Puppies need supervision and socialization, house training, exercise, and lots of practice to learn good behavior. Taking care of a puppy at the same time you take care of young kids can be overwhelming, and often means that the puppy's early socialization and training are sacrificed – which can mean big problems later.

Puppies younger than 5 months have sharp teeth and claws and don't yet know how to play gently. They're also fragile themselves. Puppies and children need to be supervised 100% of the time so that neither gets hurt.

Adult dogs, while they need our time and training to make the transition to a new home, may fit into a household faster especially if they are already used to living in a home with children.

At the SPCA of Texas, we can help you pick out a dog whose personality might make them a good match for your family.

Finding the Right Dog

Generally speaking, very small dogs aren't a good match for young kids; they are physically more fragile than larger dogs and don't often tolerate kids' activities and handling well. Herding dogs, such as Border Collies or Heelers, sometimes herd children, chasing them and nipping at them. Protective breed types can also have trouble with children, especially if they haven't been socialized with them from a very early age.

A dog's breed may be an indicator of certain personality traits, but ultimately every dog is different. Plenty of mutts and mixed breed dogs from shelters can make excellent family pets! That's why it's important to have an open discussion with an adoption counselor about the type of dog that would work best for your family.

Qualities to look for:

- Friendliness with people of all ages
- Tolerance for noise and physical handling
- Willingness to share toys and food
- Ability to stay calm and regain their composure in exciting situations

Safety and Supervision

Young children and dogs can never be left alone together. With an adult present at all times, you can make sure children and dogs are treating each other appropriately.

For more pet care tips, visit [spca.org/pettips](https://www.spcatexas.org/pettips)

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