



PARENT Responsibilities for the Newly Adopted Dog

The type of relationship we see on TV between children and dogs is not the norm and not a reflection of what real dogs, especially a shelter dog, can be like with children. The younger the child the more unpredictable their behavior can be, and this can be unsettling to a new dog who is looking to feel safe in his/her new environment. Never leave a child alone with your new dog. Not even for one second to turn your head and answer the phone.

Rough play should not be encouraged by anyone in the family which includes wrestling, mouthing, grabbing human body parts and clothing. This is especially relevant when an adult member of the household plays with the dog in this manner, as size does make a difference, and you never want to put a child at risk for injury. In addition, sending mixed messages to your new dog about what is appropriate or not can be confusing. Rough play and using the mouth, should never be considered okay play.

Your dog should be fed meals in an area completely protected from and away from the children. A quiet, private place to eat can reduce your new dog's anxiety about feeding and prevent guarding behaviors. The dog should also be fed portions that are easily finished, so there is nothing left in the bowl for the dog to linger over and guard. Empty bowls should be taken up and put away, so the dog does not guard the feeding area. It is the same for when the children are eating, the dog should not be present or in the vicinity of food when the family, especially the children, are eating. So, reconsider snack times and eating foods away from the designated dining area of your home.

Most children are not bitten by their own dog, but by a friend's or neighbor's dog. This means two things:

1. Watch your own dog when your children have friends over. Many dogs will tolerate behaviors from the child in their family and not from a stranger. Visiting children often do not behave the same as when they are home and so need to be monitored when interacting with your dog.
2. In addition, as a parent, it is important that you teach your own child how to behave with other dogs. You need to do your due diligence and meet, fully knowing what kind of dog, and the home environment your child will be visiting.