

Children and Greyhounds

Do you have children? Before you adopt a greyhound, consider the following:

Dogs and children should NEVER be left alone together. Even the most tolerant dog cannot stand up to badgering or harassment. Kids are kids and dogs are dogs.

Children are loud. This can confuse dogs. It's common for dogs to associate loud noises with trouble.

Many greyhounds are returned from families with children. "The dog snapped or nipped at my child." There is a reason. Adults can read body language, kids can't.

Families are busy and need to understand it is a job/project to bring a dog into the family. To bring a dog into your home from our kennel with small children and a busy household is going to be an adjustment and work for all.

It is not a matter of "Child-Proofing your Dog" but also "Dog-Proofing Your Child." You need training, the children need training, the other parent needs training and the dog needs training. It is a team effort. As in raising children, the dog requires consistency in training.

These are guidelines to introducing an ex racer to your home with young children. If you can commit to the following steps without exception you are up to the challenge.

1. Do not get a greyhound for your child, to grow up with or to teach your child responsibility. This is a family decision and a family dog. It may be your intention to have the greyhound be your child's first dog but your dog will bond first and closest to the person who feeds it, lets him out doors, walks him, generally cares for him and spends the most time with him. These days kid's schedules often call for the children to be away from home more than the adults. The more the child participates with feeding, caring for, and training your dog, the more the dog will respect your child and seek out his attention.

2. Most dogs, of any breed, do not like to be hugged or kissed on the face, etc. Many dogs, including greyhounds, will warm up to this eventually but for the first few months don't let any child, yours or others do this. Most dogs would rather be scratched on the chest. They see a hand coming over the head as threatening, especially from a being their own size and one as active and confident as a child. Let the dog come to you and the child.
3. Do NOT let your kids or their friends chase your new greyhound. This includes crowding him or backing him into a situation he feels like he can't escape from. This provokes fear biting.
4. Do NOT let your kids approach the dog while eating.
5. Walking the dog. Do NOT let your child walk your dog. You need to get a feel for how well your dog walks on the leash. If he is a puller, there are corrections that can be made. Greyhounds may take off after small moving creatures and you need to be prepared with your hand through the leash loop. Do not tolerate jumping up and excitement, wait until he calms down. Greyhounds enjoy walks. With the nervousness of being new it is a good thing to do to bond with the dog. Attach a second leash to the dog that the child can hold while you are out walking.
6. Do NOT spoil the dog. This dog came from a simple, structured and routine life. Do Not over treat or feed from the table. These are lean athletes and not meant to be fattened up. A routine is the key to success.
7. PLAYTIME - Greyhounds are not rough and tumble dogs. No tug of war or similar rough housing. Games like these boost the dog's confidence and can lead to dominate behaviors toward children. These dogs are strong. Rough play can go too far; this is where play can lead to nips. Do NOT allow children to pull their ears, poke, hang on, prod and pull on the dog.

8. Don't shut him away! This is not a dog to be put in another room. Greyhounds are very social and want to be part of your life.
9. Training is a good thing. A class to learn basic manners is great and it is a wonderful way to deepen the bond between you and your greyhound. Teach your child to give basic obedience commands and work with the dog and the child so that the dog obeys.
10. Sleeping greyhounds. Do NOT allow children to approach your greyhound sleeping on his bed. In fact – even if he is lying down with his head up, it is his quiet time. Do not allow the child to sleep or get on the dogs bed with or without the dog. If using a crate do NOT let your children crawl into the crate, with or without the dog in it; children need to respect the dog's space. Depending on the dog's personality he may tolerate close company, but for the new dog adjusting to a new home and family it is a lot to adjust to. Greyhounds sleep hard and many sleep with their eyes open. Teach children to call out the dog's name and be sure the dog is awake before approaching it. Greyhounds are used to being awakened when activity begins in the kennel and not by touch. Young children like to smother a dog with kisses which can seem like a scary display of “in your face” dominance to a kennel dog. Children are at eye level to a dog and it is important to know not to stare at a new dog in the eyes as this can seem like a threat.
11. Furniture. Do NOT let the dog on the furniture as this puts him on an equal level with you and your child. You and your child need to be at a higher level than the dog.
12. Child proof doors and gates. This includes car doors. Teach your children the importance of keeping doors and gates closed at all times. A spring attached to outside gates is highly recommended. Make sure you have a hold of your greyhound by the collar before opening the door to let anyone in or out of the house.
13. Kindness – a child old enough to have a dog share their home is old enough to treat it with kindness.