



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 behavior that may be well-intentioned, but could be interpreted by the hound as badgering or harassing.

Children can be loud at times and this can confuse some dogs. It's common for them to associate loud noises with trouble.

Most adults can read a dog's body language, but many children cannot. Many greyhounds are returned from families with children because warning signs were not recognized or heeded.

Most families are busy and need to understand it is a "project" to introduce a dog into the family. Bringing a dog from our kennel into your busy household is going to be an adjustment and it will take participation from all family members.

It's not just a matter of "Child-Proofing your Dog" but also "Dog-Proofing Your Child." All household members will require training and the dog will need training – a team effort. Just like 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 make the decision to get a greyhound just 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 of doors, walks him, and generally cares for him and spends the most time with him. These days, children's schedules often call for them 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 all breeds do not like to be hugged or kissed on the face. Many dogs, including greyhounds, will warm up to this eventually but for the first few months do not 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 smaller human 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 children 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 can provoke fear biting.
- 4) Do not let your children approach the dog while eating.
- 5) Walking the dog: Do not let your child walk your dog. Adults need to get an initial 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. Rather, wait until the dog calms down before interacting. Greyhounds enjoy walks. With the nervousness of being new to the household, walks are a great way to bond with the dog. Attaching a second leash to the dog for the child to hold can be a great way to introducing dog handling to your child.

- 6) Do not spoil the dog. These dogs come from a simple, structured and routine life. Avoid over-treating or feeding 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. Avoid tug-of-war games or similar roughhousing. Games like these excessively boost the dog's confidence and can lead to dominant behaviors toward children. Greyhound 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) It might be tempting to move your greyhound to another room to allow children to roughhouse, but greyhounds are not a breed to be isolated to another room. Greyhounds are very social and want to be part of your family members' lives.
- 9) Training is always a good thing! Training classes to learn basic manners are 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 children so that the dog learns to obey.
- 10) Sleeping greyhounds: Do not allow children (or any family member) to approach your greyhound while sleeping on his bed. 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 dog's 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 threatening.
- 11) Furniture: Do not allow 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) Childproof doors and gates, including 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 firm 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.