

How to Train a Dog Around Children & How to Train Children Around a Dog

Part 1: Training the Dog Around Children

Teach calm behaviour first

Before asking your dog to be good with children, train calm behaviour without children present:

- Sit
- Down
- Stay
- Settle on a mat/bed

Reward calmness, not excitement.

If Loki lies down quietly → praise softly, give a treat.

Create a “Safe Zone”

Your dog must have a place where:

- Kids can't go
- The dog can rest
- No one bothers him

Examples: crate, bed, behind a gate.

Teach a cue such as: “Bed” or “Place.”

Reward gentle interactions

Reward your dog when he:

- Moves away instead of reacting
- Sits politely for attention
- Chooses calm behaviour

Praise: “Good gentle.”

Never punish growling — it's communication. Instead: remove the child; teach the dog that resting is safe.

Supervise at all times

Even the gentlest dog should never be left:

- Alone with a child
- In charge of managing space

Eyes on child + dog = safety.

Practice real-life skills

Teach Loki:

- Leave it (for toys, food around kids)
- Drop it (to avoid tug-of-war with children)
- Wait (at doors, before greeting children)
- Reward with a calm “good boy” + treat.

Part 2: Training Children Around a Dog

Golden Rule: No Touching While...

Teach children that they must NEVER touch a dog who is:

- Eating
- Sleeping
- In their bed/crate
- Chewing a bone or toy

Easy rule for kids: "Let sleeping dogs sleep. Let eating dogs eat."

Teach "Petting Rules"

Kids learn 3 steps:

- Ask an adult first
- Let the dog sniff
- Pet gently on the chest or side (not face or head)
- No hugging — most dogs don't like it.
- Teach "Soft strokes only."

Child language:

Kids don't understand "be gentle." Use:

- "One finger strokes"
- "Pet like you're touching a butterfly"
- "Stop if the dog moves away"

What NOT to do

Teach kids using simple rules:

- 🚫 No screaming near the dog
- 🚫 No running with food around the dog
- 🚫 No riding, pulling, climbing, or hugging
- 🚫 No grabbing toys from the dog

Reward children like you reward dogs

Praise good behaviour:

- "Great asking permission!"
- "I love how softly you stroked Loki!"
- "Thank you for giving him space."

Positive reinforcement works on everyone.

Part 3: Create Safe Joint Activities

Here are great, calm activities for kids + dogs:

- Give a treat in an open palm
- Brush the dog gently (if the dog enjoys it)
- Help scoop food into the dog bowl (adult supervision)
- Hide treats for the dog to find
- Read books next to the dog (not on top of him!)

Keep movement slow, voice quiet.

Safety Red Flags — Stop Interaction Immediately If:

- Dog stiffens or freezes
- Dog yawns repeatedly, licks lips
- Dog shows whites of eyes (“whale eye”)
- Dog moves away but child follows

Remove the child calmly, then reward the dog for being polite