

GREYHOUNDS and CHILDREN

Here are some guidelines to follow...

Most greyhounds have never been around children and therefore have no reason to dislike them. The real question is: "Does your child/children know how to behave with animals."

Greyhounds by virtue of being 'track' dogs, generally, have not been around children. Therefore they have no reason to dislike children and in fact most greyhounds really seem to enjoy being around children. However, there are certain guidelines that we ask that you follow so that the adjustment period for you, your greyhound & your children goes as smoothly as possible. This adjustment period can last anywhere from 3 to 6 months depending on the individual greyhound and the dedication and patience of the adoptive family.

The following are some simple rules to ensure a happy relationship:

LET SLEEPING DOGS LIE - Do not jump on or even pet a sleeping greyhound. Some greyhounds sleep with their eyes open. When a sleeping dog is startled it may growl or come up with teeth before it is fully awake and realizes that the culprit is its best friend. If you must wake your sleeping greyhound, call its name and have it walk to you.

DO NOT LET YOUR CHILDREN CRAWL UP TO, RUN UP TO, LAY ON, KISS, HUG, PET, JUMP ON A DOG THAT IS LAYING DOWN AND/OR SLEEPING. Greyhounds do not understand the meaning of a child (children) rushing, crawling, running up to it or trying to kiss or hug it, when it is laying down (even if it is awake!). A dog may choose to get up and walk away, do nothing, growl or it may even snap or bite. Greyhounds sometimes sleep with their eyes open so it is very difficult to tell if one is asleep or awake. ALL of these behaviors are a warning to some degree that the dog does not like what is happening to it and they are trying to tell the child (children) to knock it off in the only way they know how. They may start off with simply leaving the area or turning away from the child, this will escalate to a growl, or defensive posturing and will then escalate to the point that if it isn't stopped they will bite. Dogs (ALL dogs) have teeth and will use them if they feel threatened. It is up to you as the parent to understand the body language of your dog and to enforce the rules of the house with the children so that this type of incident does not occur. Few if any dogs will "just bite" someone, they usually have been giving warning signs for weeks or months before they finally resort to a bite. Greyhounds are VERY docile; for them to resort to biting a person it takes a LOT of stress. Ignored warnings and eventually fear for their own safety can make them do it.

PRIVACY & QUIET - All dogs are entitled to privacy and quiet when they eat and sleep. Children must be instructed to not bother the dog during its "quiet" times. This has to be consistently enforced. The greyhound's crate is his/her "room" and should be respected. They will quickly learn to go there when things get too busy as long as they can count on being left alone while they rest in their crate. If you choose NOT to use a crate, then a room or area of the home should be set aside for the dog as its private area; this is where their bed should be. They can also be fed in this area.

CRATE - Do not let your children crawl into the greyhound's crate. Privacy is important. Initially, we recommend that you utilize the crate when your children are actively playing. It is also a good idea to use the crate when children have friends over to play. This way your new greyhound has a chance to experience and get used to children while in the safety and security of his/her crate. The use of a crate or some other method of confinement when you are not DIRECTLY supervising the dog/child interactions is mandatory for a minimum of 6 months when you have children. Just as you would not leave a toddler or infant alone unsupervised, children of any age and dogs should never be left alone unsupervised.

FEEDING TIME - Do not let your child take away the dog's food or interfere with its mealtime in any way. If you have very young children, it's recommended that you feed your greyhound in its crate to avoid any chance of a children interfering with him/her while eating.

DOOR BOLTING - Be extremely cautious about leaving doors and gates open (this goes for car doors also). Greyhounds move so quickly that they will be out the door and down the street in a blink of the eye. Teach your children and their friends about the importance of keeping doors and gates closed at all times. Make sure you have a hold of your greyhound by the collar before any door is opened to let anyone in/out of your house. It is a good idea to actively teach your dog the command for "wait" and use it consistently; this will reduce their desire to bolt through open doors. It can be started with letting them out of their crate and going in their crate and then built upon every day with your potty walks. Make the dog sit or stand and "wait"; they are not allowed to pass through the opening without the release command (usually a word like OK is used). If you are going out, attach the leash, then say ok let's go out. If you are letting them out of the crate, they must wait even after you open the door until they get the release command "OK, come on out". The key is to be consistent, reward the positive behaviors, and your dog will learn quickly what is expected of him/her.

KINDNESS - A child old enough to have a dog share their home is old enough to treat it with kindness. If they are unable to understand this, they may not be ready to have a dog as a pet.

FURNITURE - Dogs should not be permitted on the furniture or to sleep with anyone on their bed for at least 6 months, they should NEVER be permitted to sleep with a child until they have been totally established in the household, this can take up to a year. This is true for any breed of dog, not just a greyhound. To allow them equal status (by letting them sleep with a child), you place them on equal footing which can cause many behavior problems that are avoided completely by removing this temptation.

BACK TO SCHOOL - We highly recommend dogs that live with children be taken to obedience school by an adult, to learn basic obedience and to aid in the establishment of whom is in charge (you and the other two legged people in your home!). Most basic obedience classes are held in the evening, one class a week for 6 to 8 weeks. You can call your local high school for adult school education information. They usually hold dog obedience classes. Many veterinarians or boarding kennels may also be able to recommend an obedience class.

The above suggestions apply to **all** dog/people relationships regardless of age.

Source: Greyhounds of Eastern Michigan (GEM)

Greyhounds are not aggressive dogs, but unlike many breeds they are neither raised nor bred for compatibility with children. Many seem to view children as puppies and will not hesitate to discipline them with a growl or snap if annoyed or threatened. Greyhounds also do not possess either the fur or body fat appropriate for rough-and-tumble play.

A good rule of thumb is this -- greyhounds are good with well-behaved children. If your household includes a child 8 years old or younger, AGR strongly encourages you to consider your decision to adopt carefully from all angles. AGR also reserves the right to decline any adoption at its discretion. If your adoption does proceed, you must agree to the following terms. Please also remember that these rules apply to visiting children (grandkids, neighbors, etc.) as well as your own.

1. During the initial 6-8 weeks of adjustment, I will never leave a hound and a child together unattended. I will *never* leave a very young child (2 and under) alone with a hound.

2. I will never allow a child to disturb a resting or sleeping hound.
3. I will never allow a child to enter a hound's crate or other private area.
4. I will never allow a child to be a hound's primary caretaker. (Children are simply not responsible enough and no dog should be neglected simply to teach a child a sense of duty.)
5. I will never allow a child to walk a hound. (Greyhounds are very strong and can easily pull a child over, escaping in the process.)
6. I will childproof my doors so that a child does not inadvertently let a hound escape.
7. If there is an incident, I will not blame the hound, but will remain calm and contact AGR immediately to arrange a return if necessary.

If you cannot fully agree to each and every one of these terms, you should not adopt a greyhound at this time.

Source: Arizona Greyhound Rescue

It's not uncommon for a new adult dog to growl at a young child. Growling is a normal way for dogs to warn each other off of something. What you need to do is to let this dog know that the child is above the dog in the pack structure - hence the dog is not allowed to growl at the child.

A few things to do, and some resources:

Don't leave the dog and child alone together unsupervised. Always have their interaction monitored by an adult. (PLEASE do not let them sleep together in the same bed!)

- The dog should be instantly reprimanded, by an adult, if he is caught growling at the child.
- Have the child (if old enough) be the one to feed the dog breakfast and dinner, as well as any and all treats that the dog will get throughout the day. Have an adult monitor these sessions and restrain the dog until the child has set the bowl down and given the dog the RELEASE or BREAK command.
- The dog is to be physically moved off of any spot that the child wants, and should not ever be allowed to push the child out of the way. Make the dog wait until the child goes into or out of doors (or the car or the yard).
- Teach the dog a command (SIT, DOWN or STAY) and this will be the way the child begins to control the dog and takes a higher position. The child will issue the command before meals and treats, or randomly through the day.
- If the child needs privacy, place a baby gate in the doorway to their bedroom, so the dog can't go in there unsupervised. On the converse, give the dog a special "child free" area where it can get some privacy.
- Never let the child hug or otherwise confine or corner this dog until the pack order is set, and make sure that the child doesn't startle the dog awake. Greyhounds sleep hard, and often sleep with their eyes open. Teach the child 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 are not used to being awakened 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. Add to this the fact that children are at eye level to a dog and do not know that it is important for them not to stare a new dog in the eyes. This can seem like a threat to a dog and a warning snarl or bite can ensue.

Be sure that the child is trained along with the dog. The child should learn to respect the dogs space or bed and not to approach it while it is lying down unless an adult gives the child permission. No pulling on the dog's ears or harassing the dog is allowed. A dog will only take so much (even a Greyhound) and if no one steps in to save it, it will take matters into its own hands.

Resources:

Childproofing Your Dog-- by Brian Kilcommons. It's less than \$10 in softcover. He gives concrete, useful advice.

Source: Greyhound L / Lynda Adame