

Childproofing your Dog or the Two Year Old Routine

This exercise teaches your dog to tolerate rough handling with a positive attitude. You are in fact, preventing a bit further on down the road. Sometime in your dog's life, you will have stepped on him, shut his tail in a door or have to treat him medically. You want your dog to understand that this is just the way life is sometimes. Just like you had to learn to hold still for the dentist to fill a cavity, for the doctor to give you a shot or set your arm in a cast. So must your dog learn to accept forceful handling as part of his life. So, in the event a child does pull his ears or tail, your dog reacts with tolerance and not with a chomp on your arm.

To begin this exercise, you will need lots of small yummy treats and your best JOLLY ROUTINE. To start, you will work with three main areas on your dog's body; the tail, the ears and scruff (the back part of your dog's neck). Keep a very happy voice, lightly, gently and slowly, grab your dog's tail and hold it for two seconds. Then quickly pop him a treat. Repeat until your dog is looking for a treat each time you grab his tail. Now repeat the grab but a little more forcefully and quickly. Again, repeat as many times as it takes until your dog is looking for his treat, rather than what's happening with his tail. Over the next couple of weeks, repeat this cycle. You want to get to the point where you can quite quickly and forcefully grab ears, tail and scruff of your dog without him reacting at all to you, except to look for his treat. Remember to keep a very happy voice and to praise enthusiastically when he acts unconcerned about what's happening to him.

Apply this same training exercise to any type of handling a child might do to a dog. One example is running up and throwing arms around your dog. Start this by slowly walking up to your dog and hugging him lightly for two seconds. Then gradually increase your movement until you are running up and hugging him forcefully for 10-15 seconds. Other things that kids like to do to Fido are: grabbing a leg or poking a nose; poking a rib or hindquarter; or throwing a toy at him. The key here is to gradually build up to firmness and length of time holding or restraining a body part. With each dog, there is a part of their body they do not like to have touched. You want to deliberately find that spot on your dog and practice handling it so he becomes use to you touching that ticklish place.

Dogproofing your Children; Prevent a bite before it happens

Teach your child never to approach or touch loose strange dogs, dogs tied up, or dogs in cars or cages. Remember, any dog is capable of biting and you certainly do not know the temperament of a strange dog! Keep all hands and fingers away until you have asked the owner's permission to pet their dog.

Teach your child to always ask the dog's owner before attempting to pet any dog. Besides being rude to run up to someone's dog and start to pet them or give him an enthusiastic hug, it is downright dangerous. Always check with the owner first before attempting to touch any dog.

Teach your child to be a tree when approached by a loose strange dog. If a strange dog should come running up to your child, teach your child to stand still, be quiet and fold their arms across their chest. Have them look at the ground, but never directly into the eyes of a strange dog. Make sure your child understands not to run if a strange dog is following them, but to move very slowly to a nearby house to alert an adult to the situation.

Recommended Reading:

Childproofing your Dog by Brian Kilcommons and Sarah Wilson
Warner Books, 1994

Good Owners, Great Dogs by Brian Kilcommons with Sarah Wilson
Warner Books, 1992