



## CHILDREN AND GREYHOUNDS

A happy dog surrounded by happy children, frolicking gaily, gleefully chasing a ball around the yard. This is the picture of contentment – and what anyone with children pictures in their future after adopting a dog.

### *BUT*

The reality can be far different. If you have children, before you adopt a greyhound there are a number of things to seriously consider.

- Dogs and children should NEVER be left alone together. Even the most tolerant dog cannot stand up to badgering or harassment.
- The loudness of children can be confusing to dogs. It's common for dogs to associate loud noises with trouble.
- Children are seldom attuned to a dog's body language. They just can't read it and this can result in a snap or a nip.
- Bringing a dog into your home is going to require a lot of adjustment and work and will add to the already busy schedule of a family with small children.

The whole family has to be involved in bringing a greyhound into your home. It is a team effort. The adults need training, the children need training and the dog needs training. To be successful everyone needs to be consistent in applying the training.

The following guidelines have been developed to guide you in introducing a retired racer into a home with young children. If you can commit to the following steps without exception you are up to the challenge.

1. Greyhounds, like most dogs, would rather be scratched on the chest than kissed on the face. Let your children know that the dog may see their head coming quickly towards the dog's face or their hand coming over the dog's head to pat or hug them as threatening. Take the time to show your children how to respectfully approach the dog.
  2. 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.
  3. Do NOT allow children to pull their ears, poke, hang on, prod and pull on the dog. Greyhounds are not rough and tumble dogs and can be frightened by overly boisterous play. Don't encourage tug of war or similar games as these can lead to the dog demonstrating dominate behaviors toward children. These dogs are strong. Rough play can go too far turning play into nips.
  4. Let sleeping dogs lie. Respect the dog's space – whether a bed or a crate. Children should never approach your greyhound while he is sleeping on his bed. Greyhounds sleep hard and many sleep with their eyes open. They are used to being awakened when activity begins in the kennel and not by touch. Teach children to call out the dog's name and be sure the dog is awake before approaching it. Even if he is lying down with his head up, it is his quiet time. Children should not be allowed to ever sleep or get on the dogs bed.
  5. The dog beds are for dogs – the furniture is for humans. 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.
  6. Never let your kids approach the dog while eating. If your children are going to take part in feeding, first train the greyhound to wait – to sit patiently until the food is set down and the children have stepped away.
  7. If the greyhound should grab something it should not have – children should never attempt to take it away. This is a job better left for adults as the greyhound may tend to resource guard high value treats or possessions. Offering a treat or toy of a "higher value" is an effective and safe way to get your greyhound to get valued items away when needed.
  8. Do NOT let your child walk your dog. Greyhounds are strong and if they break into a run, could easily pull away from or drag a young child. If you want young children to participate in your walks, attach a second leash to the dog that the child can hold while you are out walking.
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9. 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.
10. Greyhounds are very social and want to be part of your everyday family life. Don't shut him away! However, do give your dog a spot he can retreat to if noise or playing get to be too much. This can be a crate or another room. Teach the children to respect that sometimes the greyhound needs alone time, just as they do.
11. 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.
12. 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, your children and your greyhound. Teach your child to give basic obedience commands. Work with the dog and the child so that the dog obeys.

Routine is the key to success. The retired racer has come from a simple, structured and routine life where it has been treated with kindness and respect. A child old enough to have a dog share their home is old enough to respect the unique needs of their family member and to treat him with the kindness he deserves.

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