

# Children & Greyhounds



Waterford with his best friend

Greyhounds are known as one of the best-natured of all breeds. They are typically docile and tolerant around children who treat them gently. Many greyhounds become devoted to the children in their home and will follow them around the house. We feel strongly that greyhounds are a great dog around well-mannered children despite the fact that they have not been raised with them. However, it is best to wait until your children are at least 4 years old before adopting a greyhound. This is because children younger than 4 are normally too young to understand your directions on how to treat a dog gently and leave them alone while they are sleeping or eating. A small child or toddler may inadvertently fall on the napping greyhound. Some greyhounds also become stressed by the high pitched sound of a baby crying.

It is important for parents to supervise small children any time they are with dogs of any type. Children should be taught from an early age to be kind to all animals and that they are not play toys. Even the gentle greyhound has its limits when it comes to children who might fall on it, pull on its tail or ears, or scream loudly around it. Here are some guidelines for insuring that your greyhound and your children have a happy and harmonious relationship.

## Some Guidelines for Parents

### **Let Sleeping Dogs Lie:**

Teach your children not to pet a sleeping greyhound. Wait until the dog is fully awake and call him to you. (Some greyhounds actually sleep with their eyes open.) It is important to remember that when any sleeping dog is startled, even if unintentionally, he may growl or snap out of fear.

### **Feeding Time:**

Teach your children not to interfere with the greyhound while he is eating. If you have very young children, it is recommended that you feed the greyhound in an area separate from your children.

### **Do Not Startle a Dog Who is Lying Down:**

Greyhounds have not been raised with children and do not understand a child crawling on, running up to, and trying to hug or kiss it when it is lying down (even if not asleep). Wait until your greyhound gets up and call him to you for a pet. A dog that is startled may get up and walk away, go to another room, growl, or snap at a child that has startled them. All of these behaviors are a warning that the greyhound does not like what is happening, and is telling the children to knock it off in the only way they know how. Greyhounds are normally very tolerant, but they do have their limits. Dogs seldom just bite someone--they usually have been giving warning signs for days or weeks before they finally resort to a snap or bite. Greyhounds are very docile by nature. For them to resort to a bite, they are under a lot of stress, the family members in their homes have ignored warnings from the greyhound (walking away, growling, etc.) and eventually the greyhound will fear for his own safety and may snap.



Children acting appropriately with greyhounds

### **Greyhounds Need Time to Themselves:**

All dogs are entitled to privacy and quiet when they sleep or eat. Greyhounds are naturally low key, quiet dogs that need a "time out". Teach your children to not bother the greyhound during his quiet time. As the children enjoy a quiet time to take a nap, so does the greyhound. A room or area of the house should be set aside where the greyhound can go when he wants some quiet time.

### **Crates and Baby Gates:**

If you use a crate, teach your children that this is their greyhound's special place and not their playhouse. Do not let your children crawl into the crate. The use of a crate to confine your greyhound can be very helpful when you cannot directly supervise young children. Putting your greyhound in a separate room behind a baby gate is also a helpful way to segregate the children from the greyhound when you cannot supervise.

### **Kindness:**

Teach your children to treat all animals with kindness. They should NEVER be allowed to fall on, scream at, pull a dog's ears or tail, pull it around by its collar, try to ride it, or otherwise taunt the dog in any way. Teach your children to gently pet and hug the dog.



At the prisons, greyhounds are hugged by their trainers to get them used to being hugged by a child.

### **Furniture:**

It is recommended that you not allow your greyhound on the furniture or bed with children. A child can inadvertently startle the greyhound which could cause problems as noted above.

### **Bolting:**

Teach your children never to leave a door open, even slightly. Greyhounds are naturally so fast that they can bolt out the door through a small opening very quickly. Also warn your children about the dangers of leaving gates open. It is a good idea to hold your greyhound's collar any time a door is opened to let someone in or out of the house. We also recommend that you teach and reinforce the "wait" command. Any time you are allowing your greyhound out of the door, hold the greyhound and say "wait". Go ahead of your greyhound out the door and hold his leash. Always teach them to wait until you invite them out of the door. Greyhounds in prison training are taught not to bolt and to nicely go out of the door. Always reinforce this behavior.

If you use common sense and teach your children to be gentle around your greyhound, you will have a wonderful companion for your family for years to come.

An excellent book to read on the subject of children and dogs is: **Childproofing Your Dog: A Complete Guide to Preparing Your Dog for the Children in Your Life** by Brian Kilcommons. Available on Kindle or in paperback from Amazon.

