

Children must be taught proper behavior around their new pet, and the pet needs to be taught how to respond appropriately to children. Some pets learn to bite and scratch because children pull their ears or tails, squeeze them, drop them, fall on them, or startle them by picking them up too fast. Before a child interacts with their new pet, they need to learn to “read” how their pet displays discomfort, fear, anger, and joy.

Teach your child the signs that indicate your pet is becoming uncomfortable or frightened. A cat may twitch his tail and lay his ears flat. Most dogs will often move away from the child, they may turn their head or emit a low growl. Parents can alter a potential confrontation by teaching children to change their behavior before the pet is forced to defend himself. If your pet continues to feel uncomfortable around the family, even after you have taken all of the steps to help it feel at home, please seek the assistance of a behavior specialist.

Be aware of your pet’s tolerance level for activity and stressful situations. If your pet is generally more solitary, and the family is planning a party, help your pet to handle the unusual activity by placing it in a quiet place well ahead of the festivities. It is unfair to force the pet to participate.

People enjoy a place of solitude, a quiet space. Just like their humans, animals also need a place to get away from the commotion of active family life. They need a place where they can go and be undisturbed. Children should learn to be respectful of their animal’s needs. Don’t disturb animals while they are sleeping or eating.

Judicious parents can avoid many pet-child accidents. According to Brian Kilcommons, a dog behaviorist and author, the number-one cause of dog bites to children is from the lack of parental supervision. He says, “Leaving a dog alone with a child is like leaving two toddlers in the same room with a pair of scissors.”