

A Rough Guide To Kids and Pets



Birth to six months: A quiet time for the animal/child interaction. No small child should be left unsupervised with an animal.

Six months to a year: Keep pet food and feeding areas away from crawling and toddling children. A child of this age will grab at whatever is in his or her path, so ears and tails are a target, and children have to be carefully supervised around animals to avert any unexpected reactions.



1–3 years: A time of exploration and for putting things in the mouth. A dog or cat who is possessive about his or her toys and food can be potentially dangerous to a child. The child is eye level with a medium to large dog, and dogs can see that as a threat. This age group is especially vulnerable to a biting dog.



4–6 years: By now, a child has mastered quite a lot of language and can understand more about how to interact with another living being, but a firm eye on the situation is still needed.

6–10 years: Your child can now help look after a pet – feeding, cleaning up, walking, and playing with a cat or dog or any other animal in the house.

Teens: Just a warning about this group. At some point in the teen years, your child may develop other priorities in his or her life, such as sports, band, boys, girls, existential philosophy, or shopping. Pet care chores can suddenly and dramatically go onto the back burner. *Parental supervision is a must.*



18–20 years: Many kids will be going away to college or joining the military. You need to be ready for the likelihood that taking care of the animals will revert back to the adults or other children in the family.

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