

The Family Dog

The family dog provides benefits for children of all ages. It is often a cherished and vital part of the family. But just why are dogs so important and what lessons and benefits do they provide children?

Babies

From an early age, babies can learn to respect and love animals. While an infant is too young to understand how to be gentle to her dog, she learns by watching her parents and other family members treat the dog with respect and love. She also learns not to be afraid of dogs.

Toddlers

It may seem like your dog is in constant danger as your baby begins to walk and chase after your dog. However, both your toddler and your dog are learning valuable lessons. Your toddler, who is now understanding your simple directions, is learning not to pull your dog's tail, eat his food or otherwise torment him. She is learning that if she pets him nicely or throws him a ball then she is rewarded with a wagging tail and doggy kisses. Whereas, if she is rough with him then he avoids her. Constant adult supervision is required at this stage to make sure that your toddler and dog don't hurt each other. However, it is worth investing the time now to set the foundation for a good lifelong relationship.

Preschoolers

Many preschoolers have an inherent desire to please and to be helpful. It is a great opportunity to teach children responsibility. Three and four year olds can help feed the dog and play with him. Under close supervision, preschoolers enjoy playing outside with their dogs. They can help train dogs and give dogs treats for good behavior. Preschoolers and dogs often end up being the best of friends, taking much delight and joy in each other.

Grade School Children

Grade school children can start taking more responsibility for their pets. They can easily refill water bowls and feed their pets. They can enjoy exercising their pet. At this stage, children may begin to realize why dogs are such good friends and want the dog as their constant companion.

Teenagers

A teenager can take complete responsibility for the family pet. She can be responsible for walking her, feeding her and caring for her. She can even be included in vet care decisions and proper grooming of the dog. This is a good way

to keep notoriously selfish teenagers grounded and involved in the family. A beloved pet can be a focal point for the family and source of unity when times are tough.

No matter what the age of the children, the family dog can provide friendship and instill a love for animals and a sense of responsibility. These are lessons and values that the children will take with them for the rest of their lives. Additionally, dogs provide a lot of amusement and fun that the whole family can share. So, if you are thinking about adopting a dog into your family then think about the many advantages it will provide your children.

Article by Jason Brooks of OhMyDogSupplies.com, leading provider of dog beds.