

## Preferences for Other Dogs and Kids

How do you feel about food? Are you into Indian food? Or do you prefer Italian? You can have several different preferences, and things that you gravitate towards. And, just because you like one type of cuisine, doesn't mean that you hate others. Conversely, just because you love Thai food doesn't mean you'll like Chinese food.

Dogs are the same. They prefer Thai food over Chinese food. Just kidding, they don't really care, but, they do have preferences about people they'd like to hang out with. My husband's dog hates other dogs. But she loves people. My dog hates people, but he loves other dogs. They both love the cat, but it's an unrequited love.

If your dog doesn't like other dogs, does that mean he won't like people? If your dog loves kids, does that mean she will love other dogs? Nope. Just because you love koalas doesn't mean you love your mother-in-law. There's no correlation between liking dogs and liking kids. It's more likely that your dog learned to like or dislike something because of the way you introduced him to it. If your dog was attacked by another dog in the neighborhood, chances are he won't be very thrilled to be around other dogs. Similarly, if you let children climb all over your dog, your dog won't be excited to deal with kids. If you taught your dog how to interact with adults, dogs, and kids, then your dog might be more comfortable with them.

So, if your dog gets into it with another dog, does that mean that your kids are in danger? Probably not. Before you make any decisions, it's important to understand why your dog did what he did. Did the other dog give him the hairy eyeball? Did the other dog bark or lunge first? Was there food involved? Or a toy? Were the dogs playing and then things went south? Was there humping involved? How old is your dog? How old was the other dog? Do these dogs have a history or are they strangers? Was it a corrective action or was it full on warfare? Talking with a canine professional can help identify the answers to these questions and figure out what happened and what may happen in the future.

Similarly, if your kids understand what caused your dog to snap (literally) then they can do things to avoid ticking off your dog. If your dog got into a tussle with another dog over food, it would be a good thing to teach your kids how to interact with your dog when food is involved - don't! And if your dog is possessive of his toys when another dog is near, then teaching your kids not to rip his toys out of his mouth is important. If your child is humping the dog, then, well, you might have bigger problems. But, teaching your kids the appropriate way to interact with your dog, especially if you know that your dog has triggers, is important. If one of your children hates getting tickled and the other kids torment her by tickling her incessantly, you'd step in and say something, right? Your dog has the right to be treated with the same respect that you'd give to your children.

If you talk to a canine professional, they will guide you as to what you should do. They may assess your dog and determine that he will be fine with kids. Or, they may suggest that your kids be taught to interact with your dog correctly. As a trainer, I've suggested everything from anxiety meds for the dogs when they interact with other dogs, to anxiety meds for the humans.

Before anyone makes any decisions about the future of your relationship with your dog, make sure that you know all of the information. This includes information about the other dog, the situation, the props involved, etc. When your child gets into a fight at school, you, as a parent, want all of the facts before you make any decisions. And, because your child bit a kid at school, does that mean your dog is in danger?

*Written by Sheila of Integral Dog Training in collaboration with Animal Rescue Konnection (c) 2022.*