



Fun Activities for Kids and Companion Animals

Healthy play habits between kids and family animals don't always come naturally—children need guidance in interacting safely and respectfully with animals. Luckily, the best way to learn how to play nice is to enjoy games together. Below are fun, age-appropriate activities that help develop trust and a loving bond between your kids and animals.

Play Time and Activities

Arrange play dates for your kids and animals—supervised by you—to help build a mutual respect in the same way that play dates between children create healthy friendships.

Kids 6 Months To 2 Years Old:

- Your child can lie on the floor and your dog or cat can jump over him.
- You and your child can hide and then call your dog to come find you.
- Young children love peek-a-boo games. Try holding up a cloth so that your animal is concealed. Let your child pull the cloth aside, making your animal “appear.”
- If your dog is gentle, your child can smear his own fingers and toes with peanut butter or a soft cheese product and let your animal lick them clean. (Try this with *your* fingers first. If the nibbling is too rough, choose another activity.)
- Children in a high chair, crib or playpen can drop food for your animal to enjoy, but please avoid using animal treats because your child might eat them. It is also ESSENTIAL to avoid foods that are dangerous to animals. Stick to healthy people foods such as green beans, carrot sticks, apple slices (no seeds), unsalted pretzels and plain, cooked pasta.

Kids 3 To 8 Years Old:

- Your child and dog can race to a designated finish line. If necessary, you can run with your dog on a leash.
- Your child can throw a toy for your animal to retrieve.
- Armed with treats, your child can hide while you stay with your animal. When your child calls out, let your animal go search for him. When your animal finds him, let your child give the treats as a reward.
- If your dog likes to chase water sprayed from a hose or water gun, your child can operate the sprayer or toy gun. While you're supervising, have your child spray the ground a few feet away from your dog and then rapidly move the stream of water away from her, along the ground. (Watch your dog for signs that she's not having fun anymore. If she isn't actively chasing or trying to bite the stream of water, it's time to stop.)
- Your child can blow bubbles for your animal to catch. You can purchase a bubble toy made especially for dogs, such as the Fetch a Bubble Big Bubble Blaster or the Bubble Buddy™. These toys produce flavored bubbles that are safe for dogs to ingest. Please do not use regular bubble solution. It can cause mild stomach upset and sting your animal's eyes.
- Your child and animal can team up to find treats that you've hidden. While your animal can excel at finding things hidden near the ground, your child can find things hidden higher-up.
- Your child can entice your animal to chase a toy tied to the end of a rope. You can also buy an inexpensive lunge whip from a horse tack or feed store and tie a ball or other toy to the end of it. Then your child can twirl the whip in a big circle and let your animal chase the toy.

Kids 9 To 13 Years Old:

- Older kids can attend Puppy ABC's or Dog Manners classes with their dogs, accompanied by you.
- Your child can search the Internet or library to find new tricks to teach your animal, such as Roll Over, Shake, Sit Up and Beg and attend our Canine Clever Tricks Class.
- Your child can play soccer-type games and Frisbee with your dog.
- Some children appreciate the challenge of training a dog in agility or in games such as flyball.