

Parenting: Child & Dog Safety Tip Avoiding danger zones in your home

Feng Shui with Fido™ Philosophy: This tip is designed to alert and educate parents of small children who also own a dog. There are many areas in your home that could develop into danger zones for toddlers when dogs are present. You need to know where, why, when and how a bite or snap (albeit innocent) can happen and how to avoid it.

This tip offers easy solutions and identifies the triggers for dog owners and parents! The following information is meant to help prevent a problem from ever occurring, not solve one that has already happened. All dogs (small, medium, large and elderly) can be doing a great job at handling your toddler's affection, and suddenly a bite could occur. Many dogs can be the "perfectly mannered" family pet and try to avert the "CHILD" who is coming toward them. The problem often begins in certain areas of your home because dogs are natural den animals. Meaning, dogs like small spaces and often seek cover under a chair or a coffee table for comfort and safety. This is innocent enough, however, the problem occurs when the toddler or child approaches and attempts to crowd



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the dog's space. A dog may growl or show his teeth as a warning. The problem is that while another dog would back off, a child doesn't understand to heed to that warning.

Parent awareness of these danger zones and warning signs is the key to a successful integration. Also, it is very important to have foresight as well as knowledge.

Where: Danger Zones in your home can be in many places like: doorways, dog toys, chew bones, dog food bowls, back gates, and even chairs and coffee tables.

1. Doorways and front windows of your home can become areas your dog protects, which can promote territorial behavior.

Front doors, back doors and windows are danger zones because as a dog matures they can learn to protect the front door of their home. Many dogs look out of the front window and bark at passersby all day. They learn to protect mainly out of boredom.

Solution: Apply the 'stay' command while on a leash at the front door. Occasionally, baby gate the (open) front door for a few minutes while relaxing nearby. This takes away the allure and mystery of the door



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opening with new people entering.

2. Chew Bones - Although chewing is a must for teething puppies and a natural function of a dog, parents of small children need awareness to prevent possessiveness and growling while chewing a bone.

Solution #1: Give your dog special chew bone time! Corral or gate your pup in a space that will allow him this special chew time. This is a chill out time for your dog, not a time out! Because dogs are den animals, if you don't allow your dog this time and space, they will naturally learn to find their own space and go under furniture. Over time, they can become territorial (towards children or other pets) over this space or things that occupy this space. This can lead to growling and possibly a snap. By designating a space for your dog, it will also help kids understand that dogs also need some space and alone time. This is not a time out, but rather a positive boundary.

Solution #2: Hold a chew bone (Adults only)
Hold a bone while your dog chews it for a few minutes a day. This tells the dog that you are the boss and to chew the \$ 5.00 bone you bought and not the furniture or rug. Also, it prevents the puppy from



becoming possessive and territorial over it's bones. You can do this while you are watching TV or relaxing. If your puppy struggles to take the bone away from you put him on a leash and hold the bone or sit in his gated area with him patting him while he chews.

3. Coffee tables

Puppies and often little dogs want to sleep under coffee tables. Especially if they want to get away from toddlers and kids! This is a danger zone brewing for all dog owners and parents.

Solution #1: Create a chewing area for your puppy for a few months. This will teach him early on that he has a designated chew area. Gate him for a few hours a day while you are home, but always after exercise. Put a crate in the gated area and leave the crate door open with water and a bone. This will give him a relaxation spot away from the kids.

Solution #2: Put your dog on a leash in the house and walk him around with you as you are doing other things for 5 or 10 minutes. This bonds him to you so he will derive a sense of security from you rather than to seek shelter from a table.



4. Fenced yards and back gates

Solution: Don't leave your dog in the backyard endlessly for eight hours. Break it up or exercise your dog well so he is tired before leaving him in the yard for any period of time. Back gates need to have a pad lock on them. Also, covering a gate that allows your dog to see the street with tennis netting or a fence cover will help your dog from becoming overly territorial.

5. Food bowls: Over time a dog can learn to become territorial over his food. This can be a danger zone for children and dogs.

Solution: Time feed your puppy or dog. Do not leave food out in a bowl all day. Most puppies gobble their food but some dogs are finicky eaters. This tip especially applies to small and toy breed owners! Feed your dog at a designated time that suits your schedule.

1. Put down the food for 15 or 20 min. If your dog has not finished his meal then pick up the food. "Sorry Charlie," you'll have to wait until the next feeding. Puppies and/or dogs often get distracted when kids are running through the



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kitchen. Gating your dog while he's eating is a good way to isolate mealtime. This slight formality will also allow your kids to help participate in the ritual of feeding the family dog.

2. Hand feed your puppy or dog a few times to get him used to sharing his food.
3. Feed your dog inside either in the kitchen, pantry, laundry area, mudroom, etc., but not in the yard.

You can Feng Shui with Fido™ by scheduling a time (see gating tip on Feng Shui with Fido™ tip menu) for gated bone chewing while your Toddler is loose. Then give free time to your dog while your child is napping. Remember, your child won't be a toddler forever!

Note: The above tips are designed only to teach dog owners integration techniques to avoid behaviors from developing. If your dog already shows any sign of aggression or has bitten anyone, you must seek individual help from a local professional dog trainer. Ask your local veterinarian for referrals in your area.



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