



CHILDREN AND BERNESE MOUNTAIN DOGS

People frequently choose a Bernese Mountain Dog because they have read or heard the breed is great with kids. Generally speaking, most Berners are gentle and nurturing; and most have the tendency to interact well with children. As a parent or owner please understand that you will need to spend time teaching children and your dog how to conduct themselves. Young children and puppies and even adult dogs should be closely supervised to avoid behaviors that could lead to injury of child, dog or both. Parents should also plan on providing guidance to children who visit their yard or home to ensure safe interactions.

YOUNG CHILDREN AND BERNERS - BASICS

All dogs have space boundaries just like people. Have you ever heard a person say, "heh, back off, you're in my space!"? Well, dogs don't talk; but they do have other ways to express the same thought. Children and some adults may not pick up on the language a Berner speaks when trying to tell a human to back off. Teaching children how to read a dog's language and respond appropriately to a dog's boundaries and tolerance levels is a big part of parents keeping kids safe. Berners are big dogs and could potentially frighten a child unaccustomed to interacting with dogs. Due to their size, a Berner might inadvertently knock over young children or toddlers.

Berner puppies, if left to their own instincts, will often chase and nip or bite as a form of play. Teaching children how to respond to these instinctual behaviors can be challenging.

See <http://www.loveyourdog.com/keepsafe.html>.

Teaching small children not to grab skin or a dog's fur, pull on legs, or tails, not to stare at or scream in the dog's face can be tough - since those kinds of behaviors are fairly common when young children interact with a pet. Children while playing can be noisy and abrupt in their movements. A dog can get overwhelmed by the busy activity and high pitched voices of children. Some Berners are sound sensitive and may become anxious, nervous or disinterested in children's playtime activities. For information on dogs and loud noises see http://www.akc.org/pdfs/public_education/dogs_loud_noises.pdf.



Most Berners will seek private space in a quiet location if they are stressed due to sensory overload, tired or don't want to be bothered. Owners who are not familiar with raising dogs with children are encouraged to take advantage of information available in books and on websites which provides common sense tips for parental management of dogs and children.

Parent's Book List

[Living with Kids and Dogs...Without Losing Your Mind](#) by Colleen Pelar

[Raising Puppies & Kids Together: A Guide for Parents](#) by Pia Silvani

[Childproofing Your Dog: A Complete Guide to Preparing Your Dog for the Children in Your Life](#) by Brian Kilcommons

The American Kennel Club website offers a terrific set of printable materials to assist parents in educating children to interact well with dogs.

- ▶ **Bailey the Beagle Responsible Dog Owner's Tip Sheet**
http://www.akc.org/pdfs/public_education/bailey_tip_sheet.pdf
- ▶ **Bailey Goes Home**
http://www.akc.org/pdfs/public_education/bailey_goes_home.pdf
- ▶ **Canine Courtesy**
http://www.akc.org/pdfs/public_education/canine_courtesy.pdf
- ▶ **How to Greet a Dog**
http://www.akc.org/pdfs/public_education/how_to_greet.pdf
- ▶ **Megan Meets a Mastiff**
http://www.akc.org/pdfs/public_education/megan_meets.pdf

WEBSITES FOR PARENTS AND CHILDREN

- ▶ San Francisco SPCA's "**Dogs & Kids**" page at http://www.sfspca.org/behavior/dogs_kids.shtml offers a few tips on dog/kids relationships.
- ▶ The American Veterinary Medical Association's "**The Blue Dog Parent Guide**" and CD can be ordered at <http://www.avma.org/products/children/bluedog.asp> is designed to help parents and children safely interact with dogs both inside and outside the home. The material is targeted and tested for children from 3 to 6 years old.
- ▶ The **Kids and Dogs: A Common Sense Approach** article by Vicki DeGruy at <http://www.canismajor.com/dog/kidsdog2.html> discusses dogs' instinctual behaviors, training and management to prevent bites, and offers information to anyone interested in dog behavior as it relates to child safety.
- ▶ **The Safety Factor Challenge** at http://www2.the-kennel-club.org.uk/safe_and_sound.html is a fun interactive website that teaches children how to safely interact with dogs.
- ▶ **The Kids Guide to Dog Care** website at <http://www.loveyourdog.com> provides older children with sound advice on how to care for their dog.

