

Play Date Checklist

By Joan Orr and Teresa Lewin

When a child wants to go to at a friend's house, a responsible parent asks some basic questions. For example: will a parent be home? Does the family have a pool? Is the yard fenced? Are there guns in the house and how are they secured? A parent would ask these and many more questions of a prospective in-home daycare or nanny.

Rarely does it occur to a parent to ask if the family has a dog and if so, what steps will be taken to ensure that there are no incidents.

Doggone Safe recommends that parents visit the home of the family that their child wants to visit to meet the parents and the dog. We have created a check list of situations to help parents judge whether it seems safe to leave their child at a home with a dog. We encourage trainers to copy this list and hand it out.

Red Light Criteria (do not leave your child to play at this house):

- Dog is chained or tied up or there is evidence that dog is kept tied up.
- Dog seems uncared for; house smells like urine or feces.
- Dog comes to the door barking and growling and continues even after owner answers the door.
- Owner is rough with the dog, yelling, hitting or grabbing it by the collar to get it to comply.
- Dog seems afraid of owner or ignores the owner's attempts to control it.
- Dog is kept as a guard dog.

Yellow Light Criteria (leave your child only if the dog will be crated or locked away the entire time):

- Dog comes to the door barking and/or growling, but stops when told to do so and seems friendly when the owner answers the door.
- Dog insists on getting between you and the owner's child.
- Dog is overly excited and races about or jumps all over you and your child.
- Your child is afraid of the dog.
- Dog holds his tail up in the air and wags it slowly or not at all.
- Dog wags his tail low to ground or between his legs.

- Dog seems fearful and hides, retreats from you or barks at you.
- There are multiple dogs.

Green Light Criteria (leave your child if supervision will be adequate):

- Dog is on a loose leash, in a crate or in a down stay when the owner answers the door.
- Dog greets you in a calm and friendly manner with wagging tail when the owner gives permission.
- Dog obeys the owner and the owner rewards this.
- The dog owner agrees to supervise all interactions with the dog.

The Rules for Other People's Dogs

- No hugs and kisses.
- Don't take anything from the dog, or approach him while he is eating, chewing something or resting.
- Interact with the dog only if the parent is present.
- Be a Tree and stand still if the dog is too frisky, seems threatening or otherwise causes concern.
- Call home if you are worried.

See Teresa's bad rules for more info at www.doggonesafe.com