

Little Dudes and Lucky Dogs | Dining Out with Kids and Pets

When you have kids and dogs, it's nice to take *both* out into the big wide world once in awhile. But it's much easier a task to consider than to complete. Read on for a few ways to make an afternoon outing in [Victor](#) a positive experience for the smallest two- and four-legged family members.

Feed the dog first; bring snacks for both.

Imagine walking into a new place full of scents that make your mouth water. You haven't eaten in hours and your stomach starts growling in excitement. Now, imagine that you've been told that you must sit quietly while everyone else enjoys a bountiful buffet. Chances are, you'd be rather annoyed, fidgety, and ready to leave. It's the same for your dog. Make sure Fido has had a full meal before stopping in at your favorite lunch spot. This will reduce his agitation and temptation urges and he'll be more likely to remain calm and at your feet until the kids slip him an under-table treat. Speaking of treats, younger children should be provided with plenty of finger foods to distract them during the wait. Plain Cheerios, peanuts, and unsalted popcorn are kid and pet-approved [snacks](#), in case a few strays hit the floor.

Make sure the restaurant welcomes children and pets.

Not surprisingly, many restaurants across the country have bans against animals, even in outdoor seating areas. However, many parents with young children *are* surprised to find out that some places [don't cater to children](#). It's a good idea to call ahead and ask if the restaurant has a kids menu or can otherwise accommodate the picky palettes of preschoolers and if they allow non-service animals. Some restaurants are open to both, with restrictions against size – on the animal, of course!

Eat during off hours.

Simply dining with children can be fun and stressful at the same time. Add a critter into the mix and things can get difficult fast. Avoid crowds, which can overstimulate kids and pets, by eating out when the restaurant is likely to be slow. Usually, between 2PM and 5PM are safe, as the lunch crowd has dwindled and the dinnertime rush has yet to start.

Allow pets to exercise; make sure kids are well rested.

This can be tricky unless both parents are involved. Before taking your dog out into the public eye, make sure they've had a chance to get [out any pent-up energy](#). Go for a walk, play fetch, or take a quick run around the neighborhood before leaving the house. Kids, however, should be well rested since children get cranky when they're tired and don't mind falling out in the floor in front of an audience. There are few situations more difficult to handle than trying to calm

down a temper-tantruming toddler and an energetic pup at the same time. Taking the dog outside before heading out serves the dual purpose of allowing them to relieve themselves in the privacy of your own yard as opposed to the patio of your favorite lunch spot.

Pack plenty of distractions.

Kids and pets often lose interest in things very quickly. Pack a diverse range of toys for the kids and a tantalizing arrangement of rawhide's and other flavored treats for the dog. [Kong](#), one of the leading manufacturers of durable dog toys, offers a number of products that can be packed with peanut butter or specially made meat sticks for your pet. These “stash and snack” toys will keep your pet occupied long enough for you to enjoy dinner.

Don't go it alone.

If you're going to be brave and take the entire family for a dinner out, make sure to have another responsible adult handy. Not only will this provide another set of hands to help cut chicken tenders, cleanup spill drinks, and keep napkins securely in your children's laps, you will also have an extra person to remain stationary should the kids – or the dog – have to make a sudden break for the bathroom.



Image source: [Pixabay](#)

