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Scary vacuum, so over nursing & doggie-play rules

By Ellen Parlapiano

Q How can I get my 16-month-old to play nice with our dog? All she wants to do is pull his tail and jump on his back.

She doesn't mean to play roughly. Toddlers have trouble controlling their excitement and movements, say Nancy Holtzman, RN, and Jenifer Vickery, from the Barks and Babies program at Isis Maternity Centers in the Boston area.

Of course, quickly correct your child's rough touches: "No, we don't pull doggy's tail. Pulling hurts."

Then show your toddler the right way to touch. When she and the pet are both calm, sit on the floor together. With your hand over hers, stroke the dog on the back or side while saying, "soft touch." Show her what gentle petting feels like, caressing your child's arm as you say, "soft." And praise her each time



she treats the dog tenderly.

Reward your pet too: a goody gives incentive to tolerate inadvertent pokes, Vickery says. If he's growling or seems uneasy, keep the two away from each other and consult a trainer. Finally, no matter how gentle the dog, never leave him unsupervised with kids.