

Children's Resources: Dog Bite Prevention

What Everyone Should Know

Why do dogs bite?

There are many reasons a dog might bite. Some dogs bite because they are feeling scared or threatened. Some dogs bite to protect their food, toys, puppies, or territory. Sick or injured dogs can bite. Even dogs who are happy and playing may nip too hard.



Scared

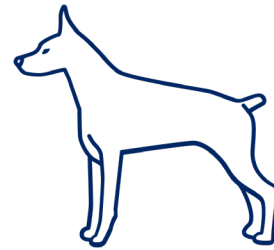
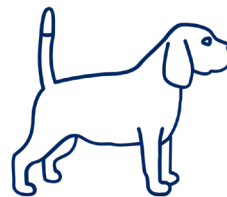
Threatened

Protective

Sick/Injured

Can any dog bite?

Yes! Any dog, no matter their size or breed, can bite. Even very friendly or familiar dogs can bite in reaction to a stressful situation. As a matter of fact, it's very common for people to be bitten by dogs that they know.



Can we prevent dog bites?

Yes! There are many things people can do to prevent dog bites, such as learn dog body language, avoid risky situations, and socialize their dogs when they are young. Check out the next few pages to learn more about what *you* can do to prevent dog bites!

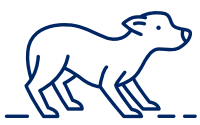


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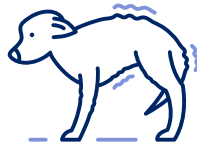
Dog Body Language

Signs of Fear

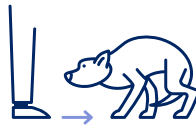
A nervous or scared dog will typically attempt to make themselves look smaller. The dog may turn their head away, tuck their tail between their legs, flatten back their ears, and crouch. Avoid approaching dogs who are scared. Here are a few signs of fearful behavior:



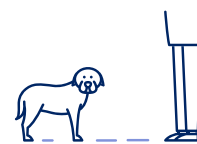
**Tail Tucked
Ears Back**



Trembling



Moving Away



Won't Approach



Lip Licking



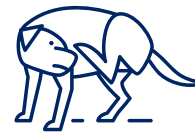
Pacing



Yawning



**Shaking Off
(not wet)**



Scratching



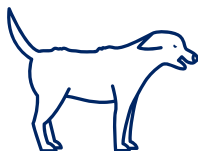
Refusing Food

Signs of Aggression

An upset or aggressive dog will typically attempt to make themselves look bigger. The dog may show their teeth, growl, and bark. The dog may narrow their eyes and hold their body very still. Avoid approaching dogs who are upset. Here are a few signs of aggressive behavior:



Possessive



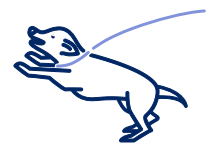
Growling



Barking



Alert



Lunging

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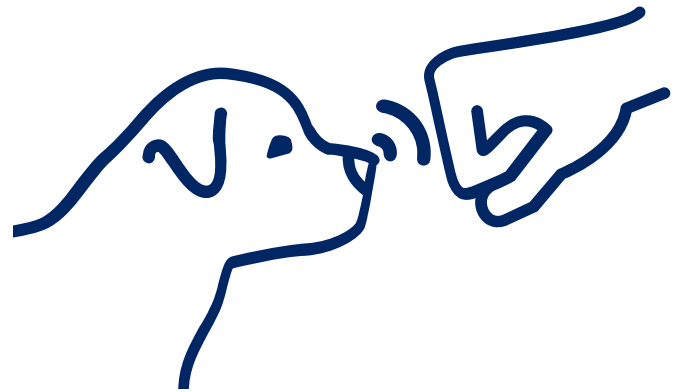
How to Safely Approach a Dog

1. Ask



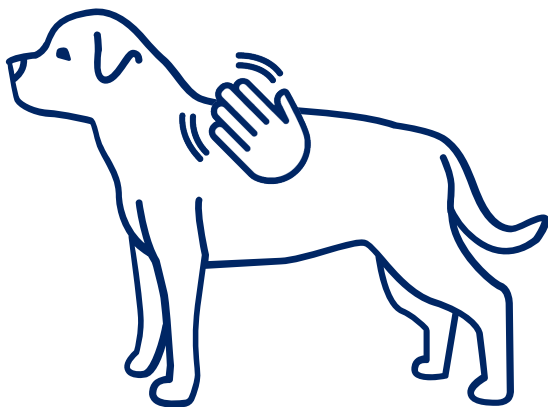
Ask the owner if it is okay to pet the dog.

2. Wait



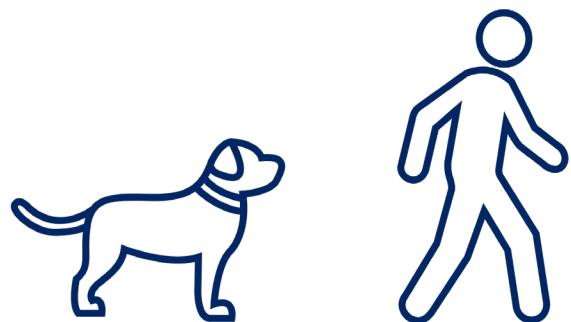
Make a fist and let the dog sniff your hand first.

3. Pet



Pet the dog gently on its side or back.

4. Walk Away



Walk away slowly once you are done petting the dog.

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Dog Do's and Don'ts

Check out this list of do's and don'ts when interacting with a dog!

Do...



Ask Permission to Pet

Always ask the owner for permission first before petting their dog. You must respect the owner's decision if they tell you "no".



Keep Yourself Safe

If you are being approached by an unfamiliar dog, stand still like a tree, look down, and clasp your hands in front of you. If you are ever knocked down, curl into a ball. If you are attacked, "give" the dog your jacket/bookbag/toy to grab instead.



Respect Service Dogs

Service dogs are trained to perform tasks that help people with disabilities. If you see a person with a service dog, do not distract the dog while they are on the job.



Let Your Dog Have Space

Let your dog have their own space where they feel safe, whether it is a crate, a sleeping pad, or a designated room in the home. If your dog is asleep or wants to be alone, let them be.

Don't...



Approach an Unfamiliar Dog

Never approach a dog that you do not know personally. If you do know the dog, always make sure the owner is there with you.



Hurt Your Dog

Don't play rough with your dog. This includes pulling on their ears or tail, trying to ride on their back, or trying to play when they want to be left alone.



Tease Your Dog

Do not offer your dog a toy or treat and then take it away. Also, do not make loud noises that could scare your dog.



Invade a Dog's Space

Never reach out to a dog behind a fence. If a dog is eating, do not bother them or try to take their food away. If the dog is playing with a toy, do not try taking it away from them either.

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Advice for Caregivers

If you are a dog owner with children in the home, there are things you can do to significantly reduce the risk of your child being bit:

- **Socialize your dog** by letting them interact with different people, animals, and environments. Also be sure to take your dog to training classes.
- **Supervise your child** when they are interacting with the family dog. Put a stop to behaviors that could hurt the dog, such as the child tugging on the dog's ears or tail. Be on the lookout for signs indicating your dog is feeling anxious or aggressive during an interaction with your child.
- **Never leave young children unsupervised** with the family dog. If you need to leave the room, keep the dog and child in separate areas with a barrier such as a door or baby gate.
- **Teach your child** how to safely interact with the family dog. Show your child where the dog can be pet and teach them how to play safely. Make sure your child knows to leave the family dog alone when they are sleeping or eating.
- **Demonstrate good behavior** to your child by always asking an owner permission before petting a new dog.

Additional Resources:

Dog Bite Prevention Week® resources from the AVMA:

<https://www.avma.org/resources-tools/pet-owners/dog-bite-prevention>

ASPCA's resource on Dog Bite Prevention:

<https://www.asPCA.org/pet-care/dog-care/dog-bite-prevention>

Jimmy the Dog videos about dog bite prevention:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z62pAg1xm08&list=PLMsZ0QAqfuVriBrbJxQdGzeolq0d_G22