



# **BE SAFE AROUND DOGS**

**Tips and advice for all the family**



## Millions of people have dogs as pets. In fact we all probably meet dogs every day, at home or when out and about.

Dogs come in all shapes, sizes, and personalities - and most of us, especially children, would find it difficult to believe that a friendly looking dog would ever intentionally hurt anyone.

But the simple fact is that all dogs have teeth and any dog could bite or snap if worried, scared or hurt. So, dog owners or not, it is important we all know and teach our children how to behave around dogs.

Owning and being around dogs has so many wonderful benefits and can be so much fun for kids - with a little foresight and research you can easily ensure that all your family members are **dog smart!**



# THE BEST PREVENTION: SUPERVISION!

"My dog doesn't even know how to bite..."

"You could do anything to my dog and he wouldn't bite..."

The relationship between a dog and its family is a special one. Unfortunately when a child gets bitten, it's often a dog they know and all too often in the place we least expect it like our own home.

The number one rule is simple 'Never leave your child alone with a dog' - **any dog**. From the smallest to the largest, even the most friendly, cute and cuddly dogs might bite if provoked. Like humans, dogs have a level of tolerance, which we **MUST** respect.

The most common mistake people make when it comes to our four legged friends, is forgetting that a dog is a living creature that thinks, feels and gets frightened just like us.

## WATCH WHAT THE DOG IS DOING



**A frightened dog**  
(ears back, cowering)

Good dog body language is relaxed and wiggly. Stiffening and freezing, cowering with ears back and tail under means your dog is not comfortable with the situation.



**An angry dog**  
(growling)

We all should know that a growling dog means an uncomfortable dog. Growling is an early sign of aggression and it should be taken seriously even if you think your dog would never bite!



**A stressed dog**  
(licking lips)

Watch for these really easy to see stress signals in your dog: yawning at inappropriate times, lip licking outside the context of eating food...



**An unsure dog**  
(avoidance)

If your dog moves away from a child, don't let the child follow it! A dog moves because it doesn't want to be bothered. If the child keeps following, their reaction could be to growl or snap to get them to move away.

**Remember, these are just a few easy to spot signs of stress and worry in dogs, but a dog can show distress in many different ways.**

# WATCH WHAT THE KIDS ARE DOING

Teaching children how to behave around dogs is important, but you can't count on the child (or the dog) to remember the rules of safe behaviour.

It only takes a second for a child to get hurt and you, the adult, are the one responsible at all times to put a stop to any potentially risky situations.



## Kids running and shouting around a dog

Children who are shouting, running around and playing noisily can easily frighten a dog. Chasing a dog can also get them over excited and the dog might nip because they think the child wants to play.

## Invading dog's space

Dogs need space and they may feel threatened by having someone trying to kiss or hug them. Yes, some dogs do tolerate it, but it's safer for the child not to do it.



## Ear pulling/Eye poking

Small children particularly may pull and poke at a dog, which could hurt or irritate the dog. Teach your child never to do this as a hurt or worried dog might bite.

## Teasing a dog

Teasing a dog can make it angry or frustrated enough to bite. For instance, if a dog has food or a toy, kids should never try to take it away.



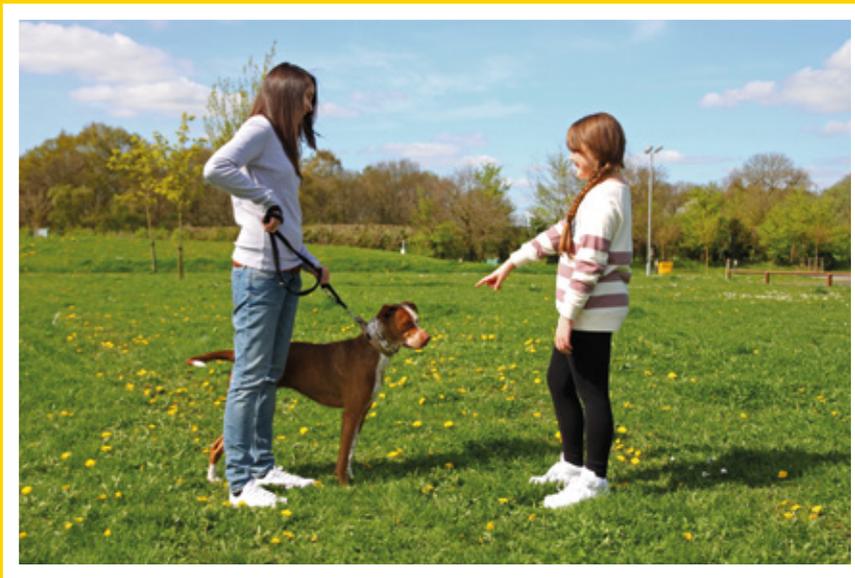
## Let sleeping dogs lie!

Dogs can feel particularly vulnerable when they are sleeping, eating or drinking. Kids should be encouraged to leave them alone at these times. Dogs, like us, need their space or they could react badly.

# ***STAYING SAFE AROUND DOGS WHEN OUT AND ABOUT...***

Even if you don't own a dog, there is plenty you can teach your kids about staying safe around dogs they meet in their everyday life. The main lesson for children practising safety around dogs is not to chase or tease dogs they know and to be cautious around dogs they don't know. There are lots of things that need to be considered – maybe the dog doesn't like children? Or is feeling poorly. Whatever the case, we should never assume that a dog will be friendly and wants a cuddle from a stranger.

Here are some specific scenarios to go through with your child to help them stay safe.



## **Approaching a new dog**

- 🐾 Always ask the owner for permission before touching a dog.
- 🐾 Ask the owner where the dog likes to be stroked.
- 🐾 Hold out your hand, with your fingers folded, without reaching towards the dog, to let the dog sniff you and get to know you.
- 🐾 Stroke the dog gently with the back of your hand where the owner has suggested. When they look like they are enjoying this, you can stroke them with the palm of your hand. Always stroke gently rather than patting or rubbing up and down.



## If a dog approaches you

- 🐾 Stand still in a confident upright position and look away from the dog. Do not crouch down as the dog may not understand what you are doing.
- 🐾 If you are holding a ball or food, throw them gently away from you. If the dog is distracted by what you dropped, you can walk away slowly.

## If a dog jumps up at you

- 🐾 If a dog is jumping up at you, cross your arms over your chest. Keep your fingers tucked in. If you can, turn so the dog sees your side, as it is less threatening to the dog.
- 🐾 Stand still in a confident upright position and look away from the dog.
- 🐾 Wait for the dog's owner or an adult to come and help, before you walk away slowly and calmly.



## If a dog knocks you over

- 🐾 If you get knocked over curl up in a ball, like a hedgehog! Cover your face and head with your arms and stay like this until an adult comes to help, or the dog goes away.



# BE DOG SMART!

Here are tips to remind kids  
how to prevent dog bites.

**B**eware of disturbing dogs that are eating or sleeping

**E**ven if for fun, don't ever tease a dog please

**D**on't approach a dog with no owner around

**O**nly stroke a dog when the owner says 'Yes, you can'

**G**et the dog to sniff your hand first, then stroke gently

**S**trange dog approaching? Stand still, look away, cross your arms

**M**ove calmly and quietly around any dog

**A**ll that hugging and kissing - you might like it, dogs don't!

**R**emember all dogs have teeth

**T**reat dogs with respect and they will respect you!

# ***HELPING EVERYONE BE DOG SMART!***

Dogs Trust are offering FREE workshops for parents and children to ensure children and dogs can live together safely and happily at home and in the community!

If you would like to arrange a Be Dog Smart workshop at your local school, community or leisure centre visit: **[www.bedogsmart.org.uk](http://www.bedogsmart.org.uk)** and contact your local Education and Community Officer.

We also offer a free to download comprehensive Be Dog Smart guide. Packed with helpful tips and hints about kids interaction with dogs. From in-depth information about dog's cues and signals, to advice on how to prepare your dog for the arrival of a new baby, and what to do if your child is scared of dogs. This booklet will provide lots of useful material for the whole family!

To download **Be Dog Smart**, please visit **[www.bedogsmart.org.uk](http://www.bedogsmart.org.uk)**



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