

**Be Dog
Smart**



Be Safe Around Dogs

Tips & advice for
all the family

In association with



Registered charity: 1063184

Millions of people have dogs as pets. In fact we all probably meet dogs every day; at home, at a friend's house or in the community. Dogs come in all shapes, sizes, and have different personalities – just like us. They also all have teeth; any dog could bite if frightened, worried or stressed.

Children and dogs can be great companions, but it's vital to keep an active, watchful eye.

If your family owns a dog or you have friends who do, you probably know what fun it can be.

But here's something you might not be aware of: to keep children and dogs safe it's essential to keep an eye on them at all times when they're together.

The sad fact is a large number of children treated in A&E for dog bites have been bitten by their family dog or another dog they know, many during unsupervised interactions.

The consequences of a dog bite can be devastating for everyone. Don't risk this happening to your child.

Be Dog Smart.

Research has shown that in almost half of dog bite cases, **the person bitten knew or had met the dog before¹.**

NHS data on hospital admissions shows **most dog bites happen to children aged 0-9 years².**



¹ BMJ Journals, How many people have been bitten by dogs? A crosssectional survey of prevalence, incidence and factors associated with dog bites in a UK community, at <https://jech.bmj.com/content/jech/72/4/331.full.pdf> (Last accessed: January 2019)

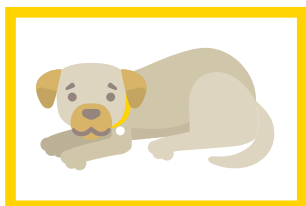
² NHS, Dog bite hospitalisations highest in deprived areas, at <https://www.nhs.uk/news/medical-practice/dog-bite-hospitalisations-highest-in-deprived-areas/> (Last accessed: January 2019)



Watch when your child is around any dog

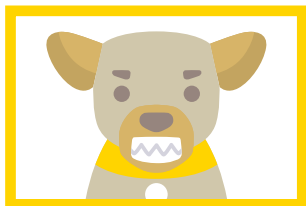
The relationship between a dog and its family can be a special one. Unfortunately any dog, including your family pet, might bite if aggravated. The number one rule is 'never leave your child alone with a dog'.

The most common mistake people make when it comes to dogs is forgetting that a dog is a living creature that can get frightened, angry, or stressed just like us. Watch what the dog is doing and look out for any of these body language signs it might be displaying.



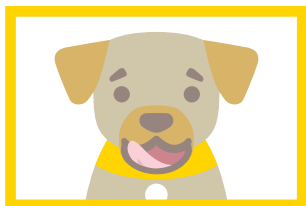
Frightened dog

- Stiffening and freezing.
- Cowering, ears back.
- Tail tucked under.



Angry dog

- Growling.
- Showing teeth.



Stressed dog

- Yawning.
- Lip licking when there is no food around.



Unsure dog

- Moving away from you means it doesn't want to be disturbed.
- Don't follow the dog.

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

Watch what the children are doing, intervene if their behaviour is unsafe or if the dog is becoming uncomfortable.

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.



Children running and shouting around a dog

- Children shouting can easily frighten a dog.
- Running around can easily frighten a dog.
- Playing noisily can easily frighten a dog.



Invading a dog's space

- Dogs need space.
- They may feel frightened, uncomfortable, or stressed by having someone trying to kiss or hug them.



Ear pulling/eye poking

- Pulling or poking a dog could hurt or irritate the dog.
- Teach your child never to do this as a hurt or frightened dog might bite.



Teasing a dog

- Teasing a dog can make it angry enough to bite.
- If a dog has food or a toy, you should never try to take it away.



Leave dogs alone when they're sleeping/eating

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

TEACH



Teach your children the rules of safe behaviour

The main lesson for children practising safe behaviour around dogs is not to tease, chase or run around dogs they know, and to be cautious around dogs they don't know.

There are lots of things that need to be considered – is the dog frightened by the children? Is the dog feeling unsure?

Whatever the case, we should never assume that a dog will be friendly or will want to be approached by a stranger.

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



Approaching a new dog

- Always ask the owner for permission before touching a dog.
- Stand still and stay quiet so the dog can sniff you if they want to. If the dog moves away then you should leave them alone.
- If the dog does NOT move away, you can then ask the owner where the dog likes to be stroked.
- Stroke the dog gently where the owner has suggested.



If a dog approaches you

- Stand still in a confident upright position and look away from the dog.
- If you are holding a ball or food, throw it gently away from you.
- When 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.
- Stand still in a confident upright position and look away from the dog.
- Wait until an adult comes to help or the dog goes away, before you walk away slowly and calmly.



If a dog knocks you over

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



Inform your friends and family

Very few parents are aware that when a child gets bitten, sadly, it all too often happens in a familiar place like home. So when visiting friends or family, please share the information in this leaflet and make any changes you think are needed to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the children and dogs in your lives. Taking a minute to chat is so much better than taking a risk. It's down to all of us to keep children and dogs safe!

When you have visitors

- **Make sure the dog is walked and fed**, and that they have a safe, quiet place they can retreat to if they want to.
- **Set clear boundaries** and separate areas for the dog and children. Put up a baby gate where necessary.
- **Be active.** If you're worried about the way a dog and child are interacting, stop the interaction right away.

A helping hand at home or away

As a busy parent, you have a million-and-one things to do and think about. Whether you're visiting a friend or relative, agreeing with your friends and family that you'll all Be Dog Smart means you can help each other out, and take turns watching and actively supervising when children and dogs are together.



Use **#bedogsmart** to keep up with and share the latest news and tips!



Want to know more?

At Dogs Trust we've got lots more information to help you and your family Be Dog Smart, and help children and dogs stay safe and happy.

Watch and learn

At www.bedogsmart.org.uk you'll find easy-to-understand information for all the family on our website, including tips and advice if you're expecting a new baby. Check out our fun Be Dog Smart videos and quiz!

Discover what your dog is telling you

As every dog lover knows, each dog is a unique individual with their own quirks, delights and challenges! Understanding your dog helps prevent problems developing – and means everyone can be better companions. Find out more at www.dogstrust.org.uk.

Book a workshop

We offer free workshops for parents and children to ensure children and dogs can live together safely and happily. To find out about arranging one at your local school or community centre, just get in touch with your local Dogs Trust Education and Community Officer at www.learnwithdogstrust.org.uk/workshops.



Who are Dogs Trust?

We're the UK's largest dog welfare charity and we offer all kinds of help and advice for families and their four-legged friends. Find out more about us at www.dogstrust.org.uk