



Rules to teach your children that can prevent dog bites

Most dogs do not bite. But ALL dogs—a stranger’s dog, your neighbor’s dog, even your own dog—have the potential to bite. That’s especially true if a dog feels threatened or scared or becomes overly excited. The following rules for children can minimize the risk that they will get bitten. Most of these rules apply to adults, as well.

General rules

- ✗ Never play with a dog unless an adult is present.
- ✗ Never go near an unfamiliar dog.
- ✗ Never pet a dog without first asking the owner’s permission.
- ✗ Never pet a dog without first letting it smell you.
- ✗ Don’t pat a dog on the top of its head. Pat it under the chin or on the back.
- ✗ Never move if a dog sniffs you. Stand still.
- ✗ Never scream around a dog.
- ✗ Never run past a dog. Don’t run up to a dog—even one that you know.
- ✗ Never sneak up on a dog. Approach from the side or front.

Don’t “play rough”

- ✗ Never tease a dog, hit it, or pull its ears, tail, or feet.
- ✗ Never play rough games, such as wrestling, with a dog.

When to “stay away”

- ✗ Never disturb a dog that is eating or sleeping.
- ✗ Never approach a dog that is taking care of puppies. Never touch the puppies.
- ✗ Never go near a dog that is growling or showing teeth.

How to handle threatening situations

- ✗ Don’t turn and run if a dog threatens you; try to stay calm and do not scream.
- ✓ If a dog approaches, stand very still—“like a tree.” Do not make eye contact.
- ✓ If you fall or are knocked to the ground, curl up into a ball and put your hands over your head and face.
- ✓ If you have been bitten or threatened by a dog, or if you see a dog acting strangely, tell an adult!

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Owning a dog when you have children



If you are thinking of getting a dog ...

- * Consult with a professional (e.g., veterinarian, animal behaviorist, dog trainer, or reputable breeder) to learn about suitable breeds for your household.
- * A dog known to have a history of aggression is inappropriate in a household with children.
- * Be sensitive to cues that a child is fearful or apprehensive about a dog. If you observe such cues, reconsider (or delay) getting a dog.
- * If possible, spend time with a dog before buying or adopting it. Try to find out where the dog originally came from and its background.

If you get a dog ...

- * Use caution when bringing a dog into the home of an infant or toddler. Never leave infants or young children alone with any dog.
- * Spay or neuter your dog (this often reduces aggressive tendencies).
- * Do not wrestle with or play aggressive games with your dog.
- * Properly socialize and train the dog. Teach submissive behaviors (e.g., rolling over to expose abdomen, relinquishing food without growling).
- * Be consistent with training and daily life—just as you are with children.
- * Immediately seek professional advice (e.g., veterinarian, animal behaviorist) if your dog develops aggressive or undesirable behaviors.

If your dog bites someone ...

- * Immediately restrain the dog, away from the scene.
- * Check on the victim. Seek medical advice.
- * Provide needed information to the authorities or the victim (e.g., your name and address, the date your dog was vaccinated against rabies).
- * Report the incident to your homeowner's insurance company and comply with all local reporting laws.
- * Contact a veterinarian about the behavior of your dog and ask for suggestions.

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