



# **BE SAFE AROUND DOGS**

**Tips and advice for all the family**



**DogsTrust**

In association with



**Ambitious  
about Autism**

Registered charity: 1063184

## **This leaflet is to teach your family how to be safe around dogs.**

This information has been written in association with Ambitious about Autism so it can be easily understood by everyone, including children and young people on the autism spectrum. Reading this leaflet and explaining the following pages to your family will help you all to be dog smart and safe!

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, so it is important we all understand and teach our children how to behave around dogs.

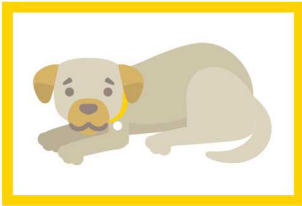
Owning and being around dogs has so many wonderful benefits and can be so much fun for kids. With a little preparation and planning, you can make sure that all your family members are dog smart and safe!



# THE BEST PREVENTION: SUPERVISION!

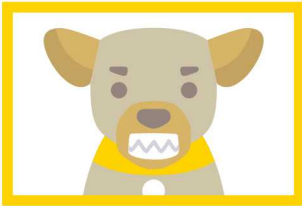
The relationship between a dog and its family can be a special one. Unfortunately any dog, including your family pet, might bite if aggravated. The number one rule is 'never leave your child alone with a dog'.

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.



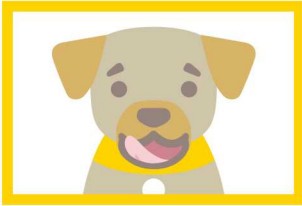
## Frightened dog

- 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.

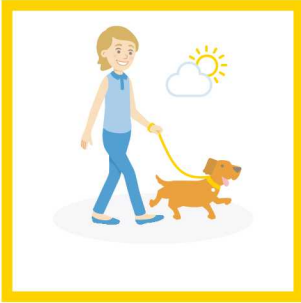
## ***STAYING SAFE AROUND DOGS WHEN OUT AND ABOUT***

**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.



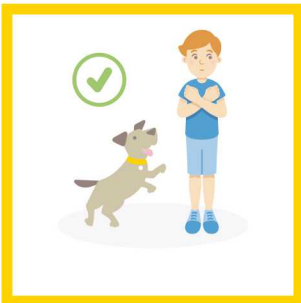
### Approaching a new dog

- 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.

# BE DOG SMART!

Here are some tips:

**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 without an owner around

**O**nly stroke a dog when the owner says "yes, you can"

**G**ive the dog a chance to sniff you while you stay still and quiet, before stroking 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 kindness and respect





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

Dogs Trust are offering FREE workshops for schools, 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.learnwithdogstrust.org.uk](http://www.learnwithdogstrust.org.uk) and contact your local Education and Community Officer.

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

For more information about autism and to access parent training in understanding the condition, visit [ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk](http://ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk)



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