Be Safe - Dog Bite Safety & Education

Pet Professional Guild Educational Handout #1

Did You Know?

· Half of all children bitten by dogs are under the age of 12.
· Most dog bites are by the family dog or dogs known to the person.
· Most dog bites are preventable.

A dog bite can happen very quickly. There are numerous reasons why dogs bite. For example, the dog may be unsure of the situation, want space, feel scared or threatened, be protecting his food or toys, be feeling ill or be in pain. Safety is paramount for both children and dogs and by following a few tips you can reduce the likelihood of these unfortunate incidents. Most importantly, never put children and dogs in a situation where their safety is in question.

· Be aware of the potential dangers – even if it is the family dog.
· Be responsible – provide active supervision at all times.
· Be aware that even supervision does not guarantee a child will not get bitten. Dogs move very quickly and there may not always be time to intervene, even if you are watching closely for signals.
· Educate yourself and others in reading canine body language so you know when to give the dog space.

There are always going to be situations where dogs and children find themselves in close proximity – local parks and playgrounds in particular. The noise of children playing and running around can be a huge attraction for many dogs but others will find it frightening. Even the friendliest of dogs can become startled and bite if they feel threatened or scared.

Courtesy of Doggone Safe

Why "Be a Tree"?

"Be a Tree" is a simple phrase that means so much in the right context. Dogs react to movement, noise and eye contact. If you are feeling threatened or unsure around a dog then keep these tips in mind:

· Avoid running and screaming.
· Avoid eye contact – this can be seen as a threat by a dog. Lower your chin to your chest so as not to expose your face or neck and look to the ground.
· Stand very still with your arms folded and your feet rooted to the ground – this reduces the risk of the dog chasing or attacking.
· Be quiet – this reduces the risk of over-exciting the dog.

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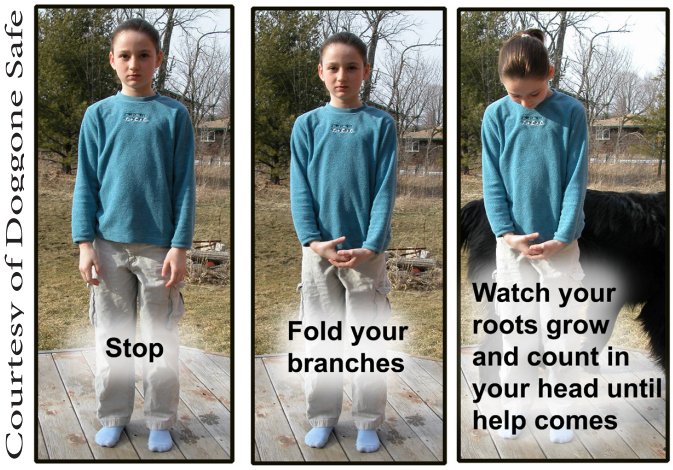
Screaming and shouting can escalate the dog's reaction. By doing these things the dog is more likely to sniff at you then walk away. The more boring you become, the less interest the dog will have in you.



But What Happens if a Dog Knocks You Over?

"Be a Rock"

- Roll yourself into a tight ball on your knees.
- Clasp your arms around the back of your neck.
- Stay there and do not move.

Again, try to be as boring and quiet as you can. Remain in the Tree or Rock position until someone comes to help or you are sure the dog has moved away. If you ever feel afraid, do not be embarrassed to ask for help. If you see a dog that is loose, ask the owner to put him on a leash. Never stare at a dog and never approach one that is tied up outside a shop or in a yard.

Learning to read and understand canine body language combined with knowing how to act safely around dogs empowers you with a knowledge that can benefit people of all ages and help them make safe decisions. "Be a Tree" is a program designed to educate by Doggone Safe – an organization dedicated to bite prevention. Programs like this are a valuable tool and provide different learning strategies, including interactive games, visual images and positive messages that help children gain the confidence to make the right choice.

For more information on Doggone Safe and to find a "Be a Tree" presenter in your area, see www.doggonesafe.com.

Denise O'Moore ADipCBM MIACE MISAP
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Pet dog owners should begin training and socializing their dog as soon as he/she joins the family. All training should be done in a positive manner using rewards based, scientifically sound training methods.

Please consult the Pet Professional Guild's Directory to find a trainer in your area: www.petprofessionalguild.com/PetGuildMembers.

To learn more about force-free training and humane, up-to-date, scientifically sound behavior modification and training methods, see www.petprofessionalguild.com

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