

Preventing Dog Bites

Dogs may bite people if they are scared, hurt, or protecting something precious.

Dogs may protect food, toys, home (bed, crate, house, car), and family.

This behavior is *normal*, but not *safe*.

Resource Guarding Prevention

- Some dogs are genetically predisposed to guard their food and toys.
- Since we cannot predict which dogs will develop guarding behavior, **all young puppies must be taught not to guard possessions from people.**
- Adults and then children (under adult supervision) should do the following exercises *before* your puppy develops guarding behavior, and *before* he has adult teeth:
 - When your puppy is eating dinner, take his bowl away without any warning, add a special bonus treat to the bowl and then give the bowl back. This will teach the puppy that people who take something away return it with a great bonus. Imagine if someone stole your wallet, and then returned it with extra money in it – you would want the pickpocket to strike again!
 - When your puppy is eating his kibble or working on a chewy, play with the food and touch him all over, occasionally adding a special treat to whatever he is eating. This will teach the puppy to like it when people approach and touch him while he is eating.
 - When your puppy is playing with a favorite bone or toy, take it away without warning, give him a special bonus treat and then return the item to him. This will teach the puppy to like it when people take away his favorite things.
 - When your puppy is lying awake on his favorite resting place (dog bed, crate, sofa) gently pick him up and move him to another location, then go and get him a favorite toy or a treat. This will teach the puppy to like being approached and handled when he is on his favorite resting places.

Bite Inhibition

Hopefully you are doing a marvelous job socializing your puppy, and teaching him not to guard his possessions – all to minimize the chances of him biting later in life!

- We also want to make sure that if he *does* bite someone as an adult; his teeth will barely break skin. This restraint in using his jaws is called bite inhibition.
- Teach bite inhibition by reacting with a yelp: **“Yikes”** to the hardest puppy bites. Puppies are programmed to know that a high-pitched yelp means someone got hurt. They learn this while playing with other dogs, too. Your puppy will learn to bite softer and softer, until he bites with barely any pressure at all!

- Some puppies get excited when they hear a yelp – instead of easing off they bite again even harder. If your puppy does this then he needs a brief time-out after you yelp. You can use his crate or a puppy proof room for a time-out, any boring place where he is left alone for a couple of minutes will do the job of teaching him that when he bites too hard he loses his friends. Do not forget to direct him towards an attractive chew toy when his time-out is done.
- Once his adult teeth come in he should be nipping *much* more softly. Once he nips with almost **no** pressure, you can teach him to keep his teeth to himself by saying “Off” and giving him a time-out for uninvited mouthing.

Facts about Dog Bites

- All breeds bite
- Dog bites are the #1 cause of facial disfigurement in children
- Children under 10 account for 50% of all dog bite victims
- Children under 5 account for the majority of severe dog bite victims
- Almost 50% of children are bitten by age 18
- Most victims are bitten by a dog they know, in the dog’s own home
- Formal obedience training (teaching to sit, stay, come, heel) does not prevent dog bites

Bite Proof Children

Supervise children interacting with dogs and teach the children these safety rules:

- **Do not pet strange dogs without permission from the owner, your guardian, and *the dog* (ask the dog to come to *you*, instead of you going towards *the dog*)?** This is still a rule, even if their tail is wagging!
- Always ask a familiar dog if he wants to be petted by calling him to you instead of approaching him. If he does not come when you call him then he does not want to play with you and you must leave him alone.
- **Avoid dogs that are:**
 - In cars, behind fences, tied to a chain or rope
 - Caring for a litter of puppies
 - Eating (unless training a puppy under adult supervision)
 - Sleeping
 - Near a toy or bone (unless training a puppy under adult supervision)
- **If a dog growls or chases you *be a tree trunk*, which means:**

- Stand still with your legs together, hold your fists under your chin, look up at the sky, and stay quiet while the dog sniffs or licks you
- **If a dog knocks you down *be a log*, which means:**
 - Keep your face down on the ground, hold your fists over your ears, hold your elbows alongside your body, and stay still and quiet while the dog sniffs or licks you