

Children and  
Safety Around Dogs

# Dogs

Lets talk about safety when  
you are playing around dogs.





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## **Who owns a dog?**

### **Tell us about your dog**

Generally, dogs like to hang out with us; they like to swim and play ball, go for walks or just sit beside us when we are reading or watching TV.

## **What does your dog like to do with you?**

Dogs can't tell us how they are feeling so it is up to us to "read the signs" and respect their moods. It is important for us to know how to act around dogs so that they are happy and calm, and our goal today is to teach you ways to behave so that you and the dog both feel safe.

# How to Act Around Dogs You Know

If it is a neighbour's dog or a friend's dog, always ask the person in charge if you can pet it. Sometimes a dog can be sick or hurt and not want to be bothered that day so it is best to check with the adult in charge of the dog to see if everything is ok before you play with it.

Always let a dog see you and smell you before you touch it, even if it is your own dog. Dogs get to know people, places and things by how they smell. It is one way that they learn.

Always touch the dog gently. If you are not sure how to pet a dog, the owner can show you how.



Dogs generally like to be scratched under the chin and sometimes on the front of the chest.

Just like you don't like to have someone stick their hands in your face, dogs don't like it either. Be careful not to poke the dog in the nose, mouth, ears or eyes. Do not grab the dog's tail, and never hit the dog.

It is best never to hug a dog. It may make them feel like you are holding them down and that can frighten them.

Dogs don't like to be stared at. Staring in their eyes is a way that dogs signal to each other that they are ready to fight. Even though you may have staring contests with your friends it is not a good game to play with a dog.

Never corner, crowd, or stand over a dog. Always let it see that it has a way

out of the room or a space. Again, it can make them feel afraid and no one likes to feel that way.

Never put your face close to a dog's mouth.

Never bother a dog when it is sleeping. You know how grumpy you can feel if someone wakes you up when you are sleeping. Dogs are the same. They don't like to be bothered when they are napping and they nap a lot!

*What happens when someone wakes you up from your nap?*



Dogs are very protective of their puppies. Just like your parents take care of you and run to help you when you need it, dogs do the same for their puppies. Always stay away from a dog with puppies - even though the puppies are really cute!

Imagine that you have a snack in your hand and some one comes by and stares at you or reaches to take it from you. What would you feel? It is the same for a dog. They are very protective of their food so do not touch a dog when it is eating, or chewing a treat.

Some dogs are as tall as you and can easily take a snack or a toy right out of your hand. If that happens just let them have it. Dogs don't like to share. Your parents can get you a new snack and everyone can be happy.

*What is your favourite toy?*

Dogs have favourite toys too and are not very good at sharing. Never take a dog's toy and if they take one of your toys let them have it - or ask an adult to come and get your toy from the dog.





If you are riding a bike, get off your bike and walk with the bike between you and the dog.

If a dog jumps on you, fall down; curl into a ball; cover your head with your arms and fists; and stay there until an adult comes or the dog goes away.

If two dogs are fighting, do not try to stop the fight by yourself. Immediately find the adults in charge!

Let's all practice what to do if a dog jumps on us and knocks us down.

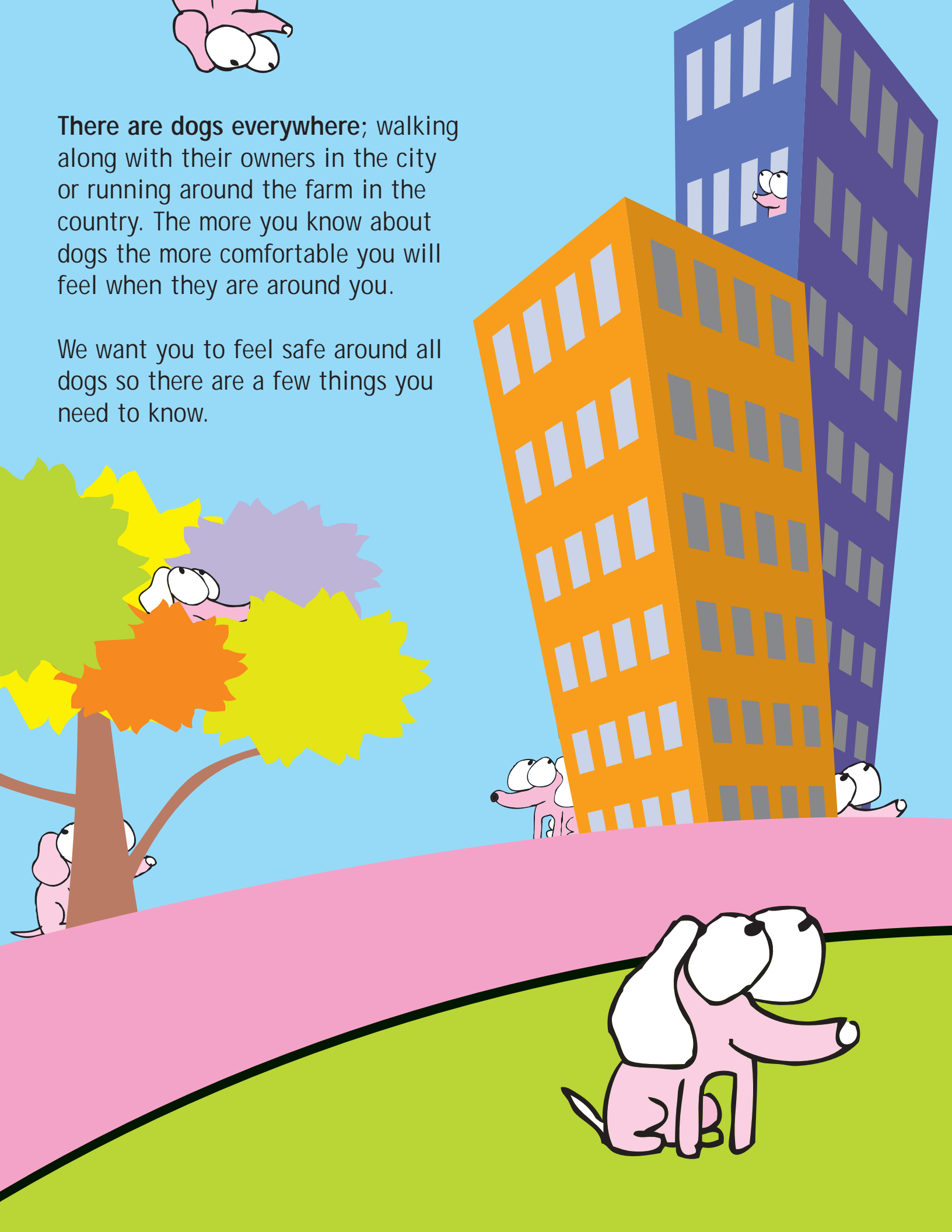
No one likes to be teased or hit or yelled at. Dogs are the same. Do not play fight, tease, yell at, or chase dogs. There are better games to play with a dog.

Can you think of some safe games dogs might like to play?

Running and yelling can excite a dog and maybe scare it. It is best to slow down and walk past a dog.

**There are dogs everywhere;** walking along with their owners in the city or running around the farm in the country. The more you know about dogs the more comfortable you will feel when they are around you.

We want you to feel safe around all dogs so there are a few things you need to know.





Here are some other reasons dogs may get scared.

### **The dog may be old.**

Old dogs can go deaf and get arthritis or stiff joints and muscles.

An old dog may not hear well, so quick movements and strange noises can startle it more easily.

An older dog may become afraid of fast moving things more readily because it probably does not move as quickly as a younger dog and can't follow the action so easily.

### **The dog is sick or hurt.**

If an adult tells you a dog is sick or hurt it is best to stay away. Just like when you get sick or hurt yourself you don't want a lot of people around and you sure don't want someone to poke your skinned knee! It hurts enough already!

If a dog is sick, it just wants to sleep and get better; it does not want to be bothered. Leave the dog alone in its crate or bed/sleeping area and let it take care of itself or let an adult help. Just stay clear.



**The dog might be a "stray".**

If a dog is walking without a person it is called a "*stray*". This dog may be hurt or more afraid than most dogs because it is lost. The dog may be shy of humans and will be thinking of protecting itself.

**What do you do if you see a "stray" dog?**

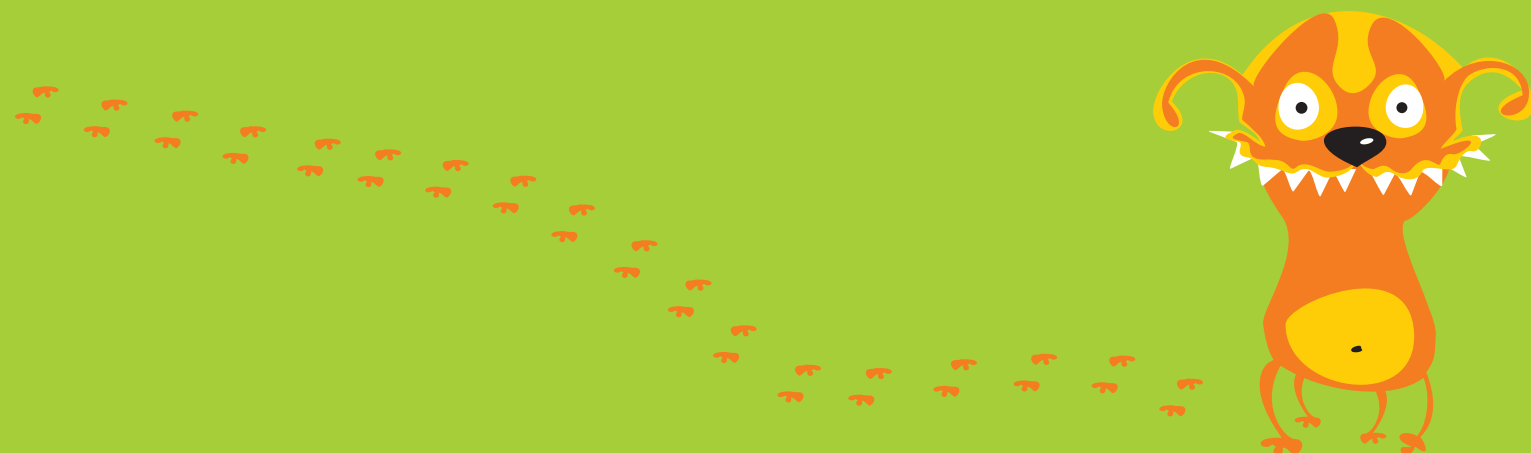
It is best to slowly move away from a "*stray*".

Call or find an adult as soon as possible when you see a dog without an owner.

**DO NOT GO NEAR THE DOG.**

Try to remember as many details as possible about the dog, like its colour, size, and whether it had a collar.

**IF THE DOG COMES TO YOU, STAND STILL AND LET IT SMELL YOU.**



# How To Act Around Strange or Loose Dogs.

Always ask the person in charge if it is ok to pet their dog. Ask if the dog is friendly. Remember to touch it gently and calmly.

Because dogs protect their place, never approach a dog that is tied up, and never poke your fingers at a dog through a fence. Never try to pet a dog through the window of a car.

Stand perfectly still when a strange dog approaches you, and let the dog sniff you. Tuck your hands under your chin and keep your arms at your sides. Remember that waving arms and quick movements may frighten a dog.

Never run away from a dog that is chasing you. Stop and stand still. Stay calm. Slowly back away, and always keep the dog in view but do not stare in the dog's eyes.

If a dog jumps on you, fall to the ground; curl in a ball; and cover your head and neck with your arms and fists. Wait until someone comes to take the dog away, or wait until the dog loses interest and it walks away on his own.



# Dogs Protect People, Places and Things.

*How many of you here know about sharing?*

"Protecting" means that the dog thinks it is the boss; it is in charge of the safety of all the members of the house. Dogs think they are the protectors of certain people and they don't want anyone else to come near.



*Does your dog protect you?  
How does s/he show it?*

Dogs do not usually like to share. Dogs also protect things like toys or food and sometimes other pets. They think that the ball or bone is theirs and - they don't like to share! Sometimes dogs protect other dogs or cats or family pets. They will "*keep an eye*" on the other pets almost like a babysitter and come to the rescue if they think there is danger. Dogs protect people, places and things, whether it is food or a Frisbee or their best friend.

*How do you feel when someone takes your toys away?*

Dogs are protective of their space. This could be their bed or sleeping crate. It could be a front porch to a house. It could be their doghouse or their entire yard. It could be a car. Anyplace the dog regularly goes is a place that they may protect.

This means that they don't want you in or near those places and they will usually warn you away with a growl.

*Do you have a special place you like to go where you don't want anyone else to bother you?*



# How dogs warn us before they bite.

**Most dogs don't want to bite.**

Biting is the very last choice a dog makes. Most dogs will give a warning, and sometimes many warnings, before they bite.

*Can you tell me something a dog may do to warn me away?*

All dogs give signals that they are going to bite before they actually do.

Sometimes the signals are simple and direct, such as growling. Sometimes the signals are confusing, or they seem to be saying two different things at the same time. For example, a yawn and a tail wag, then a bite.

If you are not sure what the dog is telling you with its signals then it is best to stay away at least until the owner can let you know everything is ok.



Each dog is different, but some common warning signs are:

**The hair rises on the dog's back.**

It sticks almost straight up like the spines on a dinosaur.

**The tail is pointing straight up.**

It may seem that some dogs always have their tail pointing straight up but the warning sign is a bit different so if you are not sure what the dog is telling you by its tail then you need to stay away until an adult can tell you it is safe.

**The teeth are showing like in a grin.**

Almost like a smile. Usually you will hear a growl as well as see the teeth, but not always.

**The dog barks.**

And sometimes only once before it bites. Owners or people who are around the dog all the time know the meaning of different barks from that dog but you may not understand. Just be aware that it may be a signal that it is going to bite.

**The dog growls.**

It sounds like a gurgle coming from back in the throat. Sometimes dogs make that noise when they are playing tug-o-war. It is always best to slowly back away if you hear a dog growl.



Some less common warning signs are when the dog:

**Yawns.**

We usually think that yawning means a dog is tired or bored but it can also mean that it is ready to bite.

**Pants.**

We usually think this means the dog is hot but depending on the situation it can also mean they are afraid and ready to bite.

**Stares.**

Some dogs only give this one sign before they bite. It is never good to stare at a dog and we will talk about this next.

**Shows the whites of its eyes.**

The dog will roll its eyes from one side to another so we can see the white part, which we usually never see when we look at a dog's eyes.

**Wags its tail.**

This is usually a sign of friendliness and happiness but sometimes it means that the dog is nervous or afraid and is going to bite.





*Can you show us how a dog rolls its eyes? Show us how a dog pants.*

So you can see that the signs are different and sometimes confusing when it comes to understanding what a dog is trying to tell us.

If you are not sure what the dog means by its actions, always leave it alone.

Now we know **WHY** dogs bite.

*Why do dogs bite?*

Dogs bite because they are **AFRAID** or they are **PROTECTING** some person, place or thing.

But **REMEMBER**,  
**MOST DOGS DON'T BITE.**



# The Following Websites

and their links can give you more detailed information on how to provide a positive experience between dogs and children.

## **Canadian Veterinary Medical Association**

<http://www.animalhealthcare.ca/>

## **British Columbia Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals**

<http://www.sPCA.bc.ca/animalissues/whydogsbite.asp>

## **Search - Animal Services or Animal Control of any city.**

*For example:*

<http://www.halifax.ca/AnimalControl/index.html>

## **Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) or the Humane Society of any city.**

*For example:*

<http://www.doggonecrazy.ca/>

<http://dogsandkids.ca/default.html>

## **Protecting children from dog bites**

### **For Educators**

**The B.C. S.P.C.A has a package for sale called "Bite Free".**

More information is available at:

<http://www.sPCA.bc.ca/Educators/ThemeUnits.asp>

### **In New Brunswick and the Maritimes:**

#### **Benny the Dog Bite Prevention**

[http://www.edmundston.ca/bennythedog/parents\\_en.html](http://www.edmundston.ca/bennythedog/parents_en.html)



**For kids to play on the internet**

[http://www.loveyourdog.com/  
tricks.html](http://www.loveyourdog.com/tricks.html)

<http://pbskids.org/clifford/games/>



[www.ckc.ca](http://www.ckc.ca)

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