



# The Rules To Approaching a Known Dog!

Pet Professional Guild Educational Handout #3

## Is It Safe to Approach a Known Dog?

You may assume that it is safe in certain contexts to approach a dog that you know. However, you still need to exercise caution and respect the dog's space. Every child – and adult for that matter – should be taught a few basic rules about how and when to approach a dog. The majority of dog bites occur in the home with a known dog. This might be the family's own dog or the dog of a friend, relative or neighbour. The majority of dog bite victims are children but, with greater awareness and careful management, many of these bites could be prevented.

Sharing the following rules and teaching them to both adults and children can help everyone stay safe.

## What Are the Rules for Approaching a Known Dog?

- Always ask permission from an adult.
- Never run up to a dog, even a dog you know, as this can frighten him.
- Don't stare at the dog as he can find this very threatening.
- Let the dog decide if he wants to interact with you. Try stroking him for just a few seconds on his chest or chin (not the top of his head) and then stopping. If the dog snuggles closer you can continue to pet but if he moves away, let him go.
- Make sure the dog sees you approaching. Try not to startle him or catch him unawares.
- Do not approach a dog when he is eating. Some dogs "guard" their food as they are worried someone will take it away. If your dog behaves in this way, please contact a certified force-free trainer and ask for help.
  - Do not approach a sleeping dog. A dog that is suddenly woken might bite.
  - Do not approach a dog who is chewing on a bone or playing with his favourite toy. Some dogs "guard" their possessions and might bite. This is known as resource guarding. If your dog does this, please contact a certified force-free trainer and ask for help.
  - Do not bend over a dog or crowd him.
  - Do not hug a dog. Most dogs do not like to be hugged and can find it very threatening.
  - Never sit or stand on a dog. Never tease a dog. Do not poke, hit or kick a dog and never pull his ears or tail.
  - Remember that not all dogs are the same as your dog. Some dogs love to say hello while others prefer their own space.



A good way to cement a relationship of empathy and mutual respect between a child and a pet dog is to allow the child to be involved with teaching the dog a new skill. Simple “tricks” can be great fun for both dogs and children. Remember to reinforce (reward) the dog for good behaviours and reinforce the child too. Plenty of reinforcement with lots of supervision will lead to a lasting bond.



## Can I Approach an Unknown Dog?

Children should be taught never to approach an unattended dog. If a child sees an unattended dog he/she should walk away slowly and tell an adult.

## What to Do If an Unknown Dog Approaches You

Stop and stand still. Fold your arms in. Look down towards the floor. The dog should quickly lose interest and walk away. Once the dog is out of sight, walk away. Do not run away, as running away can entice a dog to chase.

Please remember: Any dog can bite. Children should be supervised at all times when interacting with a dog, even the family pet.

Adults and children should learn about dog body language, so that they can better understand how a dog is feeling and reacting to each individual situation.



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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:

Pet Professional Guild Directory:

[www.petprofessionalguild.com/PetGuildMembers](http://www.petprofessionalguild.com/PetGuildMembers).

*To learn more about force-free training and humane, up-to-date, scientifically sound behaviour modification and training methods, see*

[www.petprofessionalguild.com](http://www.petprofessionalguild.com)