



**Be Dog  
Smart**

**Essential safety  
tips and advice**  
for your family to  
know, use and share

# Children and dogs can be great companions, but it's vital to keep an active, watchful eye.

If your family owns a dog or you have friends who do, you probably know what fun it can be.

But here's something you might not be aware of: to keep children and dogs safe it's essential to keep an eye on them at all times when they're together.

The sad fact is a large number of children treated in A&E for dog bites have been bitten by their family dog or another dog they know, many during unsupervised interactions.

The consequences of a dog bite can be devastating for everyone. Don't risk this happening to your child.

**Be Dog Smart.**

Research has shown that in almost half of dog bite cases, **the person bitten knew or had met the dog before**<sup>1</sup>.

NHS data on hospital admissions shows **most dog bites happen to children aged 0-9 years**<sup>2</sup>.



# Be Dog Smart. Use your **WITs**.



**WATCH**



## Watch when your child is around any dog

When you know a dog well, it's really easy to over-estimate their tolerance. But much like humans, every dog – even a dog you know, love and trust – has limits. If any dog feels worried, scared or hurt, they may bite in self-defence.

What's normal behaviour for a child, such as running, shouting and energetic play, can be difficult for a dog to cope with.

And even if you teach children the rules of safe behaviour around dogs, you can't leave it up to them to remember every time. When they're having fun or being curious they may forget, putting themselves at risk and causing stress and unhappiness to the dog.

Never leave a child and dog together alone. Remember to actively watch them – even at home with your own lovely pooch.

Be sure you know and watch for these common ways dogs show us when they're feeling anxious or uncomfortable – and that it's a good idea to give them some space. Remember though, every dog is different and will have their own way of showing you that they are distressed.



- > Ears back
- > Cowering
- > Licking lips
- > Yawning
- > Moving away
- > Avoiding contact
- > Growling
- > Snarling



For more information on behaviour signs to look out for visit **[www.dogtrust.org.uk](http://www.dogtrust.org.uk)**

<sup>1</sup> BMJ Journals, How many people have been bitten by dogs? A crosssectional survey of prevalence, incidence and factors associated with dog bites in a UK community, at <https://jech.bmj.com/content/jech/72/4/331.full.pdf> (Last accessed: January 2019)

<sup>2</sup> NHS, Dog bite hospitalisations highest in deprived areas, at <https://www.nhs.uk/news/medical-practice/dog-bite-hospitalisations-highest-in-deprived-areas/> (Last accessed: January 2019)



## Inform your friends and family

Very few parents are aware that when a child gets bitten, sadly, it all too often happens in a familiar place like home.

So when visiting friends or family, please share the information in this leaflet and make any changes you think are needed to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the children and dogs in your lives. Taking a minute to chat is so much better than taking a risk. It's down to all of us to keep children and dogs safe!

### When you have visitors

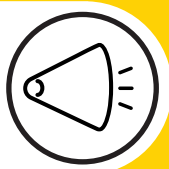
- > **Make sure the dog is walked and fed**, and that they have a safe, quiet place they can retreat to if they want to.
- > **Set clear boundaries** and separate areas for the dog and children. Put up a baby gate where necessary.
- > **Be active.** If you're worried about the way a dog and child are interacting, stop the interaction right away.





## A helping hand at home or away

As a busy parent, you have a million-and-one things to do and think about. Whether you're visiting a friend or relative, agreeing with your friends and family that you'll all Be Dog Smart means you can help each other out, and take turns watching and actively supervising when children and dogs are together.



## Teach your children the rules of safe behaviour

Share the advice here with your children to help ensure that they're safe and that dogs are happy and well cared-for. Don't forget young children must always be watched and actively supervised, though – you can't count on a child to always remember...



### When you meet a new dog



- > **Do let a dog that's out for a walk enjoy doing** what they want to do. This is their special time to sniff and explore as well as getting exercise and having a poo!
- > **Do always ask** the owner's permission before touching their dog.
- > **If they say yes, stand calmly and quietly** with your arms by your side and wait patiently for the dog to approach you. Then stroke the dogs side or shoulder gently.
- > **Do walk away calmly** if the dog moves away at all during the meeting.
- > **Do keep calm** if a dog jumps up at you. Cross your arms, turn and look away. If you get knocked over, curl up like a hedgehog and cover your head with your arms until an adult comes to help.

**Hey kids!**  
**Do you know how  
to Be Dog Smart?**



## **When you are at home or at a friend or relative's house...**

> **Do be calm:** no loud noises, running or chasing games, which can worry a dog.

> **Do give a dog space:** dogs don't like hugs and kisses the same way we do.

> **Do be kind:** never ever tease a dog with toys or food.

> **Do keep your hands away** from a dog's eyes, mouth and ears. No pulling or poking – it can hurt them!

> **Do leave a dog alone** when they are eating, sleeping, or playing with a toy. Being disturbed can upset them.

**Dogs don't always like to  
be touched or stroked. Cuddling  
a teddy bear is better, they'll  
never complain!**



## Want to know more?

At Dogs Trust we've got lots more information to help you and your family Be Dog Smart, and help children and dogs stay safe and happy.

### Watch and learn

At [www.bedogsmart.org.uk](http://www.bedogsmart.org.uk) you'll find easy-to-understand information for all the family on our website, including an autism-friendly guide for children and tips and advice if you're expecting a new baby. Check out our fun Be Dog Smart videos and quiz!

### Discover what your dog is telling you

As every dog lover knows, each dog is a unique individual with their own quirks, delights and challenges! Understanding your dog helps prevent problems developing – and means everyone can be better companions. Find out more at [www.dogstrust.org.uk](http://www.dogstrust.org.uk).

### Book a workshop

We offer free workshops for parents and children to ensure children and dogs can live together safely and happily. To find out about arranging one at your local school or community centre, just get in touch with your local Dogs Trust Education and Community Officer at [www.learnwithdogstrust.org.uk/workshops](http://www.learnwithdogstrust.org.uk/workshops).

Use **#bedogsmart** to keep up with and share the latest news and tips!



### Who are Dogs Trust?

We're the UK's largest dog welfare charity and we offer all kinds of help and advice for families and their four-legged friends.

Find out more about us at [www.dogstrust.org.uk](http://www.dogstrust.org.uk)

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