

Ward's Dog Training Presents:



How to Prevent Dog Bites & What Signs to Look For

“His bark is worse than his bit” is a phrase repeated to often that is not necessarily true. Most people take for granted that dogs can bite, averaging 4.7 million cases annually. Any breed of dog can and will bite when provoked, looking at the breed alone will not tell you which dog will lick your hand or bite it. Knowing how to properly approach a dog and assess their body language can help you avoid an unpleasant greeting.

Why Dogs Bite

In many instances biting is a last resort mechanism when all other signals to make the offender leave or leave the dog alone have been ignored. Fearful dogs that feel like they are cornered and their space is being encroached upon will give signs to try and let you know they are uncomfortable with something. Continuing to approach the dog increases their anxiety and takes away their option to get away leaving them to fight their way out of a stressful situation. Some dogs may bite out of dominance. If your dog is displaying aggressive behaviors consult with a Canine Training and Behavior Specialist. A dog may bite to protect a “scarce” resource such as food, toys, or treats, etc. You should always use caution when attempting to take objects away from the dog. Your body language and how you approach a dog can also be misinterpreted. Keep in mind a friendly greeting to a person can appear threatening and uncomfortable by the dog. Take this short quiz below to see how much you know now then continue reading to learn the “*Warning Signs*” and the proper way to approach a dog.

How Much Do You Know?

Do you know enough to keep from being bit by a dog? Use True or False for the answers below.

1. The best way to greet a dog is to lean over them slightly with your hand extended for them to smell
2. A wagging tail means the dog is friendly
3. Fearful or shy dogs are not a threat

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4. You should never look an aggressive dog in the eyes
5. Chaining a dog can make them more aggressive

Answers: 1.F 2.F 3.F 4.T 5.T

I bet some of these answers surprised you.

Body Language of the Bite

Dogs communicate with each other thru body posture. Since they do not have the ability to verbally speak we must rely on their physical cues to help determine their state of mind. Most dogs (Not ALL Dogs) give warning signs before they bite. These signs or signals are often misunderstood or ignored by us. The signs to pay attention to are the looks on their face, ears- are they pointed or folded back? Tail- up or down? Tucked? Hair and overall body posture. Each dog is different and forms of these signs can vary. Some dogs show all the signs some dogs none some only 1 or 2. Some dogs show the signs and it's so quick we miss it.

Usually a fearful or shy dog would prefer to be left alone than bite. Bites can also occur out of aggression such as a dog feeling challenged or threatened or a mama dog with young pups. These dogs will usually show a forward leaning rigid body stance, be focused and alert eyes, high stiff and possible wagging tail, forward ears, teeth showing, & growling. **(Some dogs do not growl before they bite!!!)**

Dog Friendly Greetings

People treat their dogs like children, but the fact is they are not people and do not communicate the same way we do. Often when we greet other humans we look them straight in the eye, lean forward, and extend your hand, or hug them. This could be interpreted as a show of dominance or aggression to a dog making them uncomfortable. Instead of forward movements, approach the dog with your body turned to the side. **Do Not extend your hand!** Or stare at them directly in the eyes. Keep your voice calm and confident. Be still and stay composed. Do not run away as this can heighten the dogs excitement and lead them to chase after you. Dogs require personal space. You should not force yourself on an unfamiliar dog. Let them come to you on their own terms. Use food or treats to reward them. Do not make quick movements towards them. If the dog shows any signs of shying away, or being aggressive not comfortable in the situation back away calmly allowing them to get comfortable again then try again.

You cannot tell by the size, breed, or sex of a dog if they will bite. Though dogs inherit traits that are particular to their breeds each has their own unique temperament.

When a dog is with their owner **YOU need to ask permission to approach and pet their dog!** If they say no you need to respect their wishes. There is a reason for this. The dog may have issues, may of bitten someone or something before.

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Kids and Dogs

Kids particularly boys ages 5-9 years old make up almost 30% of the 4.7 million dog bite victims annually. Bites to the face are more common in children since they are closer to eye level with most dogs. It is very important to educate children on how to approach and handle dogs to keep both them and the dog safe. Get them in the habit of asking an adult if it's ok if they pet their dog. Make them aware that not all dogs are friendly or pettable. Teasing dogs behind fences, chained in a yard, left in a car can be especially dangerous, as can rough treatment. ***Never leave a small child alone or unattended with any dog, even one that is familiar.***

Preventing Your Dog from Biting

As puppies often nip or bite during play or for attention. It may not hurt when they are young, a bite from an adult dog can be dangerous. Teach your puppy early not bite by diverting their attention with obedience exercises. If you are playing with your puppy and they bite redirect them into a sit or down and reward them with a treat or praise when they do what is asked. This will help show the dog that biting is not acceptable.

At Ward's Dog training we believe that a well-behaved & well-trained dog is a happy balanced dog and a better companion. Each dog and owner is unique that's why we use a variety of techniques, customizing your dog's training experience to suit their personality and your individual needs. Using our training techniques with consistency and patience your dog can still be your bundle of joy.

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