

This guide is part of a package of materials to help teachers teach their students how to prevent dog bites. We recommend that the poster, the guide and the illustrated laminated sheets are used as additional elements for classes and clubs on health and safety. They can also be used for classes and clubs that deal with environmental and animals issues.

World Animal Protection and the Global Alliance for Rabies Control (GARC), are inviting everyone to work together to halt the rabies virus. In most cases this disease is spread through dog bites.

Children between the ages of 5 and 14 are those most affected. The best way to eliminate canine rabies is to vaccinate dogs and prevent bites.

Dogs are an important part of our lives. They are our best friends and guardians, they offer us their company and we think of them as part of the family.

Communication matters

But, why would a dog bite us? It's usually because dogs and humans communicate in different languages. Because we don't understand dog language, we can create situations that may lead

a dog to bite us. But if we learn to behave responsibly around dogs, we can avoid situations that result in being bitten. Dogs don't bite without a reason. They might bite because they feel scared, pain or frustration. They might also bite when they want to defend their territory or when they have not been socialised with people or other animals.

Reducing rabies risk

By preventing bites, we will not only reduce the incidences of unpleasant and painful attacks, we will also reduce the risk of contracting rabies.

Because children are the most vulnerable to bites we have written this guide featuring five basic tips on behaving properly with dogs. You will also find suggestions for activities you can carry out in class.

¹ Every year, approximately 55,000 people die from rabies worldwide. The rabies virus is a fatal but preventable disease. It infects both wild and domestic animals, and is passed on to humans through contact with infected saliva in bites or scratches. In most fatal human rabies cases, dogs have been the source of the infections.

1 Don't disturb me or frighten me, particularly when I am eating or tied up.

Don't disturb me when I am with my toys, my puppies, in a car, behind a fence or when I am asleep or ill.

- Through instinct dogs will protect what is theirs and respond to any possible threats.
- They protect their territory, their owners, their puppies, food and toys. They also feel frightened or threatened when they lose something belonging to them, and may bite as a result.
- Dogs that are tied up or enclosed in confined spaces have fewer opportunities to interact with people and other dogs. This makes them more frustrated. It also increases their defensive aggression, therefore they may bite.

- Dogs in cars or behind railings will defend their territory if anyone comes near and so it's important not to approach them in these situations.
- When dogs are sleeping, sick or are being stroked, they may be startled and react by biting.
- We recommend not making sudden movements or noises close to dogs because these may also frighten them.



How to teach children to use these tips.

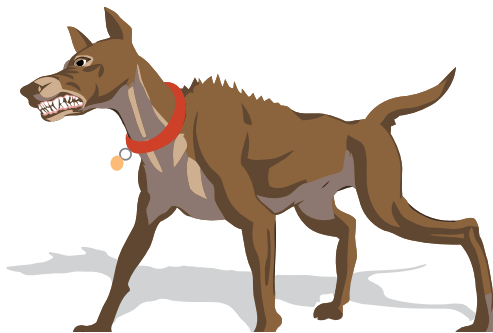
- Associate a dog's reaction with reactions the children might have when someone invades their space. You could use the example of a brother or sister who takes away their toys or their food.
- Use the laminated sheet to show the most common situations when dogs bite children.
- Act out the different situations where dogs might bite. One child can play the part of the dog, and another child can play a person. For very young children you can use puppets to show this.



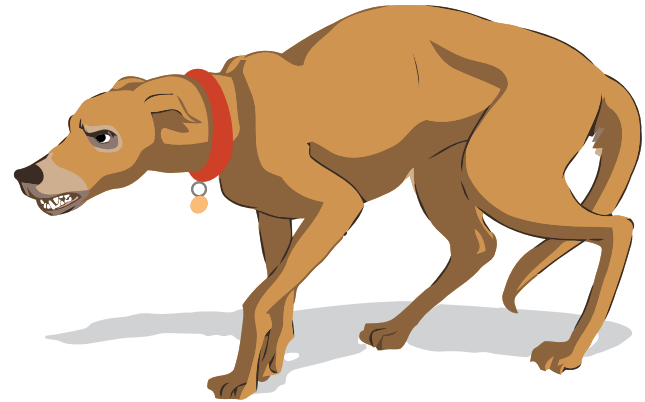
2 Keep away from me when I am angry or scared.

When I am angry, I will show my teeth. When I am scared, my tail will be between my legs and I will try to run away.

- When dogs feel threatened or scared they tell us with their bodies that they are going to bite. If children learn to recognise these body signals outlined on the right, they can avoid going near scared and threatened dogs and prevent an accident.



- When they are angry or aggressive: dogs pull back their lips, show their teeth, growl, their hair stands on end and they keep their tail straight up in the air.
- When they are frightened or scared: they move backwards, lick their faces, lower their tails, flatten their ears back and show their teeth.



How to teach children to recognise the signs they need to know.

- Use the laminated sheets showing these two illustrations and ask the children to point out which dog is angry and which dog is scared. Explain what the signs mean. For example: hair standing on end means “don’t come near me”.
- Give the children pictures to colour in and ask them to colour and point out the key parts of the body that mean a dog is angry or afraid.
- Older children can act out the various types of dog behaviour.



3 Don't move if I approach you when I am not on a lead.

- Stay still like a tree trunk.
- If you fall over, curl up and stay as still and heavy as a rock.

Dogs tend to chase things that move or make a noise. If you run away or shout, it is much more likely the dog will bite. But if someone stays quiet and still the dog quickly loses interest in that person. This gives them time to move away and prevent them from being bitten.

Tree trunk

Children who are standing should adopt this position. They should stay very still with their arms by their side like the trunk of a tree, with their heads down and their eyes closed, without making a sound



Rock

This position should be adopted by children who are on the ground or if they fall over. They should protect their face and stomach, remaining still and heavy like a rock - basically in the foetal position. When the dog has lost interest, the child may slowly and silently move away.



How to show them the positions

- Get the students to practice tree and rock positions by following the examples in the drawings.
- In small groups, ask one child to pretend to be the dog and to chase the children who run or shout. The 'dog' should ignore those who have adopted the tree or the rock position. At the end of the game, remind them of the positions again.



4 Approach me slowly and quietly

Ask permission before you touch me. Let me sniff your hand before you touch me. When you stroke me start on my back.

Lots of dogs like to be stroked, but not all the time. If a dog does not want to be stroked and the person insists on trying to stroke him, he could react by biting. It is important to remind children of the following points:

- Always ask the owner's permission before you stroke a dog. You should always be accompanied by an adult if there is a dog present. Approach the dog in a slow, relaxed manner, keeping your face away from the dog's head.
- If the dog draws back, you should not try to stop him.



- Before you start to stroke the dog, you should let the dog sniff your hand so that he can recognise you. Keep your hand in a fist shape.
- You should stroke the dog along his back or his side.

How should you stroke a dog?

- Remember, use the illustrated laminated sheet as support at each stage.
- Ask the children to act out scenes (or ask the very little ones to use puppets) trying to emphasise each one of the previously mentioned points.



5 If a dog bites you act quickly. Wash the wound and look for a first aid centre.

Remember to tell your parents that you were bitten. Tell them which dog it was and where you were when it bit you.

If a dog is not vaccinated against rabies, it can contract the virus and infect people through a bite. Therefore, it is important that children remember the following.

- Tell your parents you were bitten and where you found the dog.



- Wash the wound immediately for 15 minutes with lots of soap and water to inactivate the virus.
- Go to the nearest first aid centre or walk-in clinic as soon as possible.
- Remember as precisely as you can as much information as you can to identify the dog. This should include colour, size, breed, where the dog was and if it is usually in the location where it bit you. Do you know if the dog is vaccinated against rabies? If it has an owner?
- Give details about anything else you can remember. This information will help healthcare professionals make the best decision on whether to give you anti-rabies medication.

The health authorities will have to search for the dog and keep it in a safe place with food and water to observe it.

Rabies is a deadly disease and monitoring the dog that bit the child may save their life. That is why it is really important not to annoy, mistreat or kill it.



Activities

- Ask children to act out being bitten and the steps they need to follow next. (Puppets can be used for very small children)
- Older children can create a radio announcement on preventing rabies.



By treating dogs with respect, understanding their behaviour and their body language, by looking after them properly as pets, we greatly reduce the risk of attacks.

Animal aggression is often linked to fear. When animals are treated well, there is less chance of them being frightened of people. Consequently there is less likelihood of them being aggressive.

Treating animals with respect is clearly better for both animals and humans. Remember that to prevent rabies, the most important thing is to vaccinate pet dogs. By encouraging a culture of responsible pet ownership, we can eliminate canine rabies.





The **Global Alliance for Rabies Control** (GARC), works around the world to eliminate rabies-related deaths in humans and to reduce the number of animal deaths caused by rabies.

Visit our website at:
rabiesalliance.org



We are World Animal Protection.

We end the needless suffering of animals.

We influence decision makers to put animals on the global agenda.

We help the world see how important animals are to all of us.

We inspire people to change animals' lives for the better.

We move the world to protect animals.

Visit our website at:
www.worldanimalprotection.org