

# Preventing Dog Bites: Keeping Kids Safe Around Dogs

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Did you know that **half of all children are bitten by a dog before the age of 12**? What's even more surprising is that many of these bites come from a dog the child already knows. The good news? **Most dog bites can be prevented** with awareness, supervision, and education.

## Why Supervision Matters

Children often struggle to understand how dogs communicate, making them more vulnerable to bites. Parents should supervise **all interactions between kids and dogs**—especially when children are still learning proper handling skills, canine body language, and how to respect a dog's space. Until a strong bond of trust and understanding has been built, **no child should be left alone with a dog**.

## Why Do Dogs Bite?

There are several common reasons why a dog might bite a child:

- **Resource Guarding** – A dog may become defensive over food, toys, or treats, especially if someone tries to take them away.
- **Fear or Startle Response** – A child might unintentionally scare a dog by stepping on them, pulling their fur, hugging them too tightly, or invading their space.
- **Pain or Illness** – A dog experiencing discomfort (such as an ear infection or arthritis) may bite when touched in a sensitive area.
- **Irritability in Older Dogs** – Senior dogs may have less patience for children's unpredictable movements and energy.
- **Lack of Bite Inhibition** – Puppies removed too early from their litter may not have learned how to control their bite strength.
- **Herding Instincts** – Some breeds, especially herding dogs, may nip at running or squealing children out of instinct.



## How Dogs Warn Us

Before biting, most dogs give clear warning signs that they are uncomfortable:

**Walking Away** – A dog that gets up and moves away is signaling that they need space.

**Stress Signals** – Look for signs like yawning, licking lips, avoiding eye contact, showing the whites of their eyes, stiffening, or growling.

Understanding these cues can prevent bites before they happen.

## How to Keep Your Home Safe

✓ **Teach Kids Dog Communication** – Help children recognize when a dog is uncomfortable and how to interact appropriately.

✓ **Always Supervise** – Never leave a child alone with a dog, no matter how well they know each other.

✓ **Create a Safe Space** – Give your dog a designated area where they can relax without direct interaction.

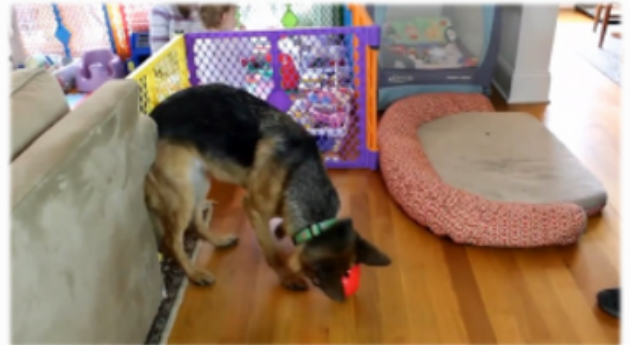
✓ **Avoid Tight Spaces** – Move furniture to prevent confined interactions, especially in areas like under tables or near doorways.

✓ **Be Mindful of Leaving the Room** – If you need to step away, take either your child or your dog with you.

✓ **No Hugs!** – Despite what we see in movies, most dogs do not enjoy being hugged. Teach kids to show love in other ways, like gentle petting.

✓ **Reward Calm Behavior** – Instead of punishing curiosity, reinforce calm and appropriate interactions between dogs and kids.

By educating children and respecting canine communication, families can foster safe, loving relationships between kids and dogs—while preventing avoidable bites.



## Bite Prevention & Canine Body Language

Understanding how dogs communicate is key to preventing bites. The following resources provide essential guidance on dog behavior and bite prevention:

- [Doggone Safe – Bite Prevention](#)

Learn strategies to prevent dog bites, recognize canine body language, and educate children on safe interactions.



- [Fear Free Happy Homes: Kids & Pets](#)

Tips for fostering a positive and fear-free relationship between children and dogs.

- [Family Paws Parent Education](#)

Support and resources for families with babies, toddlers, and dogs to create a safe and harmonious home.

- [Liam J. Perk Foundation: Dog Body Language](#)

Detailed illustrations and explanations of dog body language signals.

- [Understanding Body Language – Learn How to Read Dogs' Behavior Better](#)

A video guide to interpreting dog body language and recognizing early signs of discomfort.


- [Zoom Room Guide to Dog Body Language](#)


A comprehensive visual guide to understanding dog behavior and stress signals.

## Young Children, Infants, and Toddler Safety

As children grow, their interactions with dogs change. These resources provide age-specific guidance for keeping both dogs and children safe.

 [Dog and Baby Safety \(PDF\)](#)

 [Dog and Toddler Safety \(PDF\)](#)

 [5 Types of Supervision \(PDF\)](#)

 [Grumble Zones: Understanding Dog Discomfort \(PDF\)](#)

 [Successful Supervision: Keeping Kids & Dogs Safe \(PDF\)](#)

## Teaching Kids How to Interact with Dogs

Helping children understand proper behavior around dogs reduces the risk of bites and improves their bond with their pet.

 [How Kids Should and Should Not Interact with Dogs \(PDF\)](#)

