

# Dog safety for children

Teaching your kids respect for dogs is an important part of owning a pet. Contrary to popular opinion, most children are hurt by dogs they know, either their own or those belonging to their friends.



According to Doggone Safe, a non-profit organization dedicated to dog bite prevention through education ([www.doggonesafe.com](http://www.doggonesafe.com)), there are positive approaches children, parents, and dog owners can take to ensuring safe interactions with dogs.

## Here are three things you can teach your children to prevent dog bites:

1. **Dogs Don't Like Hugs and Kisses** – Teach your kids not to hug or kiss a dog on the face. Hugging the family dog or face-to-face contact are common causes of bites to the face. Instead, teach kids to scratch the dog on the chest or the side of the neck.
2. **Be a Tree if a Strange Dog Approaches** – Teach kids to stand still, like a tree. Trees are boring and the dog will eventually go away. This works for strange dogs and anytime the family dog gets too frisky or becomes aggressive.
3. **Never Tease a Dog** – and never disturb a dog that's sleeping, eating or protecting something.

## As parents, we also have a role in preventing dog bites. According to Doggone Safe, supervision and training are key.

1. **Supervise** – Don't assume your dog is good with kids. If a toddler must interact with your dog, you should have your hands on the dog too. Even if your dog is great with kids and has never bitten – why take a chance?
2. **Train the dog** – Take your dog to obedience classes where positive-reinforcement is used. Never pin, shake, choke, hold the dog down, or roll the dog over to teach it a lesson. Dogs treated this way are likely to turn their aggression on weaker family members. Involve older children in training the family dog while supervising. Don't allow children to punish the dog. Condition the dog to enjoy the presence and actions of children using positive experiences.

## Dog owners have responsibilities too when it comes to dog bite prevention.

1. **Spay or Neuter Your Dog** – Neutered pets are calmer, healthier and less likely to be aggressive. Neutering prevents unwanted dogs that may end up in shelters or in less than ideal conditions where they may grow up to be poorly socialized or aggressive.
2. **Condition Your Dog for the World** – Give your puppy lots of new positive experiences. Train using positive methods i.e., clicker training.
3. **Supervise Your Dog** – Supervise your dog at all times around children. Do not allow children to hug and kiss the dog. If visiting children are bothering your dog, put the dog away or send the children home.