



# Safety around dogs (in the home)



**Dogs are one of the most common pets that we look after in this country; they live in our homes and happily share our lives. We often think that they have similar feelings to us which sometimes can lead to misunderstandings in our relationships with them.**

If dogs are properly trained and socialised and we learn to understand their behaviour, unpleasant situations can be avoided. By reading this sheet and following the guidelines given, hopefully you can enjoy a happy and positive relationship with your dog.

Everyone living in a house with a dog should be encouraged to get involved in the dog's daily routine. Children in particular, should be supervised at all times and taught how to interact safely with any dog.

Training classes are a great way to help build a positive relationship with your dog. The trainer who runs the class will help you teach your dog different commands to help build this relationship.

Just like us dogs have different characters. If you have your own dog, do not assume that other dogs will be the same as your own.

**Top Tip: If you want to go to training classes, please contact Battersea's Behaviour Advice Line on 0905 0200222 for further advice. (Calls cost 25 pence per minute from a BT landline, other networks may vary).**

The golden rules below should be remembered at all times when interacting with a dog:

## Golden rules

1. Treat all dogs gently and with respect. Try to treat them how you would like to be treated.
2. Never make sudden movements when close to a dog – these can frighten them.
3. Don't scream and shout close to a dog.
4. Do not kiss or put your face near a dog – even your own dog as they can feel smothered.
5. Never stare at a dog.
6. Never go near a dog when it is alone in its own territory. Dogs tend to defend their territory, like their own garden.
7. Do not approach a dog that is asleep or in its bed.
8. Never touch a dog who is with her puppies. She may try to protect them.

## Food rules

Most dogs only eat once or twice a day and so food is very important to them. Remember your dog can't speak like we can and this can lead to confusion. If you approach him when he is eating, even if you simply want to walk straight past, he may think you are coming to steal his food and so may try to protect it.

1. Never touch a dog that is eating.
2. Don't feed a dog from the dinner table as this will encourage him to scrounge for food. Save any scraps from your meal that you wish to give him and mix these with his food.
3. Always hold your hand flat when feeding a dog and keep the treat in the palm of your hand – this will prevent him from snatching.
4. Always try to make a dog earn any reward or treat i.e. ask him to sit or give his paw. An adult should always show you how to do this.

**Top Tip: Allow a dog to finish his meal or treat before approaching him. If you need to get past quickly, ask an adult to help.**



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## Sleeping dogs

Dogs spend a large part of their day sleeping. It is important that they have an area where they can sleep without being disturbed. Some dogs, just like some of us, may be a bit grumpy when they first wake up!

1. Never approach or try to wake a dog who is sleeping, even if he is sleeping in a place that you wish to move him from.
2. Remember, if you are at a friend's house, that their dog may behave differently from your own dog so do not try to wake him up.
3. Dogs should have their own place to sleep i.e. in a dog bed. This bed should not be in your bedroom.

**Top Tip: If you need to move a sleeping dog always ask an adult to help you move him.**

## Playtimes

Games play a big role in building a relationship between a dog and a person so it is very important that we play the right kind of games.

1. All games should be supervised and kept calm.
2. Stop any games immediately if your dog gets over-excited or starts to play-bite. Rough and tumble games are not good as they teach the dog to be rough. Games like fetch and retrieve are much safer.
3. Play-biting may not hurt much when your dog is a puppy but it will hurt when he is older.
4. If the dog runs away with a toy, do not chase after him. Wait until he brings it back to you. If necessary ignore him and play with another toy rather than chase him.
5. If dogs are playing together, leave them alone and do not try to join in their game.

**Top Tip: Keep a dog's toys in a toy box so that you decide when it is time to play and not him! Remember to put your toys out of your dog's reach when you have finished playing with them.**



## Love / Attention

Just like us, dogs love and need care and attention. It is important that we interact with them in the right way so that we do not scare or crowd them.

1. If you want to give a dog some attention, call the dog to you. If the dog doesn't come to you he may not want attention – do not approach him.
2. Never give a dog a hug. Give him attention with a gentle stroke instead.
3. Ignore a dog who is being naughty or demanding attention. This will help to prevent him becoming badly behaved in the future.

**Top Tip: Keep all your interactions with your dog short and sweet. Always allow him to move away if he wants to – he should never feel 'trapped' by you.**

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## Out and about rules

Dogs can behave differently when in new situations. Dogs that don't know you may be scared or worried at first.

1. Never approach a dog alone without his owner, even if you know the dog.
2. An adult should always supervise walking a dog. Even if your dog is normally very well behaved, things can happen to scare or frighten him.
3. A dog should always be kept on a lead in busy areas.
4. Your dog should be taught to come back to you before you let him off the lead. Do not allow him to run up to and potentially scare other people or dogs.

5. Never approach a dog who is shut in a confined area, like a kennel or garden. Some dogs may guard these areas and may not be friendly.

**Top Tip: Always ask the owner if their dog is friendly before stroking the dog. Remember to let the dog sniff your hand first and stroke the dog gently under the chin; don't pat him on the head.**

