

# Forever Families



## Canine Services

*Bringing your dog out of the doghouse!*

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## DOG SAFETY

While most people love dogs and most dogs love people, we absolutely CAN NOT ASSUME this to be true of all dogs or all people. Sometimes people and dogs just don't mix. To prevent potentially dangerous miscommunications between ourselves and dogs, we should always observe some general rules of dog safety.

1. **Never approach an unattended dog**, even if you know the dog or have seen it around the neighbourhood. Even the friendliest dog may bite if it is frightened or hurt and sometimes dogs (like people) just have a bad day. So always keep your distance. If you know the owner of the dog, notify them immediately; otherwise, contact animal control and report a loose dog.
2. **Always ask "is it okay to say hi?" before approaching any dog.** Asking the question this way allows owners the opportunity to decline if the dog is in a bad mood, recently been ill or injured, or if they are just in a hurry and don't have time to stop. Other questions may not always give you the clarity you need. And always respect an owner's (and dog's) right to say "No."
3. **Never approach a dog. Allow it to approach you.** This way the dog will not misconstrue your actions as threatening or rude. It also gives shy dogs the opportunity to work up the nerve to say hello!
4. **Never make direct eye contact.** Dogs find it rude and threatening. You may of course look at the face of the dog, but do not attempt to "stare the dog down" or stare at its face for long periods of time. It could result in an attack!
5. **The best way to greet a friendly dog is to turn slightly to the side, crouch down and extend your hand for the dog to approach and sniff.** Dogs can often be intimidated by people who charge right up to them, lean over them and pat them wildly on the head and back.
6. **The best way to pet a dog is to scratch under its chin or on its chest.** Do not bang on its head, side or back. Do not try to force the dog to lie down for a belly rub. Most dogs do not like to be pet in the traditional sense (i.e. banged on) and a lot of dogs will see unrequested attempts to rub their belly as a challenge of authority. Once the dog is comfortable with you, you may stroke its back or rub an offered belly.
7. **Keep it short and sweet.** Unless the dog is obviously acting in a manner that indicates further petting is requested, pet the dog for a few minutes and then move on. Some dogs will become annoyed (and potentially dangerous) if you over stay your welcome.

## WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF THREATENED BY A DOG???

There are several important rules to follow when encountering a potentially aggressive or dangerous dog.

**Whenever possible avoid the situation.** Never go near a dog, its property or a child it may be protecting if it is barking aggressively at you. Dogs bark as a warning – take heed of it! If you are in your vehicle and a dog is barking at you, **Do not get out of the car.** Wait until someone comes to collect the dog or leave.

If you are approached by a potentially aggressive dog: (i.e barking and/or growling at you)

- Do not scream, whine or whimper. This makes you sound like a wounded or frightened animal and could increase the likelihood or intensity of an attack from the dog.
- Try to remain as calm and still as possible. Do not make sudden movements or panic and **DO NOT RUN**. Almost all dogs will give chase to a moving target and they are better designed to run than you are.
- If possible put something (such as your bag, bike or a vehicle) between you and the dog to block any potential attack.
- If possible, calmly and loudly yell for help. Do not try to soothe the dog by saying “good dog” or “nice puppy.” A dog will mistake this for praise for the unwanted behaviour. You can try to tell the dog to “go home” or “go to your bed”, if you can sound calm and authoritative but this does not always work.
- If possible, back away from the dog slowly. Do not turn your back and NEVER run. Just move slowly away from the dog.
- Most dogs will lose interest after a few minutes so long as you do not encourage the dog through threatening or prey like behaviour. If escape is impossible try to wait it out.
- Should a dog attack you, “feed” it anything you have i.e. coat, bag etc... by stuffing the item into the dog’s mouth and face. If the dog becomes occupied with the object, leave immediately – but do not run!  
If you don’t have anything, drop to the ground, curl up tight into a ball, use your hands and arms to protect your neck and face. Again try not to scream, whine or whimper as this will intensify the attack. If possible call loudly for help.
- If you are bitten, seek medical attention immediately, no matter how inconsequential the bite seems.
- Report all bites, attacks or loose dogs to animal control at the first safe opportunity.