

## Dog Safety



### Tidbits for more responsible dog ownership

Annually, hundreds of thousands of people across the country are injured by dogs.

In 2001, the Commonwealth of Virginia spent an average of \$6,152\* per person to treat the most serious dog-related injuries: those requiring hospital care.

Dog owners ultimately determine how safe or unsafe their dogs will be.

Irresponsible dog ownership is a serious problem.

Any dog can and will bite if the need to is felt. There is no 100% safe breed or cross of dog.

\* 2001 cost data courtesy of the Center for Injury and Violence Prevention, VA Dept of Health

## Dogs are more likely to bite when:

### Poorly trained, socialized and maintained.

Dogs that are not taught manners, who do not get socialized to the world and who are ignored and poorly supervised pose a greater bite risk.

**Scared.** Dogs who are scared or anxious are may bite to stop the thing they are afraid of  
**Lower tolerance.** This comes from many things including poor training, frustration, feeling scared/anxious, feeling ill/sore, age-related aches, pains and etc.

**Possessive/protective.** Dogs that are eating, chewing toys, etc., are more likely to bite if they feel threatened. Dogs with puppies may try and protect their pups, even from people they know.

**When overly excited.** Many accidents are results of play gone too far, play that is too rough, lack of manners (such as jumping when greeting), etc.

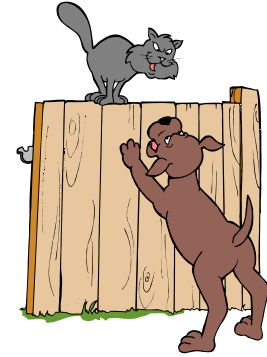
**When tired/sleeping.** A tired dog is more likely to be less tolerant of things. Startling a dog awake can lead to a bite.

**When the owner is poorly educated about dogs.** Irresponsible dog owners are the real risk. They tend not to properly train, socialize or maintain their dogs. In turn, the dogs become what the owners make them.

**When not neutered/spayed.** Hormones can affect some dog behaviors. However, altering is not a cure-all nor will it prevent undesired behaviors. There are often other factors that help determine dog behavior.

**Remember, there is NO 100% safe or 100% dangerous breed of dog. Owners determine how safe their dogs will be: regardless of breed or cross!**

## How safe is your dog?



Dogs that are socially neglected and/or bored are a greater risk. Dogs are not born knowing how to interact with our species. When bored, dogs may act up in order to alleviate the need for activity.

Dogs need to begin learning manners as soon as they enter our homes. No dog is too young or too old to begin learning.

Dogs that are left out in yards when no one is home or awake are a risk. Unsupervised dogs are at risk of teasing (intentional or unintentional) from neighbors, developing undesired behaviors such as nuisance barking, etc. Also, the dog may pose a risk to various people who may need access to your yard such as gas/electric/water meter readers. When there is no responsible adult home, dogs should be safely in the house.

Dogs should have a safely fenced area when out. Tying dogs can lead to undesired behaviors. Electric fences offer no protection from other animals or people and some dogs learn to ignore the shock. A barrier fence that is tall enough to keep the dog in and keep people from reaching over is the safest form of confinement.

## Train Your Dog

After you, a good trainer will be a strong resource with raising your dog. Not all dog trainers are equal nor are all training techniques good. Do you know what to look for in a dog-training program?

Class sizes: the larger the classes, the less individual attention you will get. Even if there are helpers, you may not get the same attention as in a smaller class.

Will the instructor let you observe a class before you enroll? You should have the chance to observe the teacher in action first.

How does the instructor handle the class? Is the class fun and positive or intimidating?

Does the instructor use a variety of techniques or just one?

Is the program adapted to the individual needs of each dog?

Are you taught practical applications of lessons as well as how to develop good manners in your dog?

Are you given any form of written instruction?

Is the instructor available to work with you one on one if needed?

Is the instructor a member of a national organization?

Lastly, how do YOU feel when you talk to the instructor and observe a class?

## Maintain Your Dog



It is important to maintain your dog's health. Along with a good trainer, a good veterinarian is very important in your dog's life.

Research veterinarians as you would your own doctor. Ask for references and to tour the facility.

Sudden behavioral changes may have underlying medical reasons. Address sudden behavior changes medically as soon as possible.

And do not forget to train and maintain children or anyone else who may come in contact with your dog. No matter how tolerant and healthy the dog is, if the people it will come in contact with are not properly trained, managed and supervised, the dog could be pushed past his limits of tolerance. Or, play could get too rough and someone accidentally injured. Dog safety is a two-way street: dogs and humans need to be educated.

Ultimately dog owners determine how safe their dogs will be.

## Resources

The Association of Pet Dog Trainers,  
[www.APDT.com](http://www.APDT.com)  
1-800-PET-DOGS  
Resource providing information for finding a trainer and what to look for in a program.

Dogwise  
[www.dogwise.com](http://www.dogwise.com)  
1-800-776-2665  
Source for books and other materials for all levels of dog ownership: novice to experienced.



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The Safe Kids/Safe Dogs Project  
[www.SafeKidsSafeDogs.com](http://www.SafeKidsSafeDogs.com)

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