



# Dogs and children

## a guide to staying safe



In partnership with Dr Sophia Yin, DVM MS

[www.rspca.org.uk](http://www.rspca.org.uk)



## Why have a dog?

Dogs and children can be great friends and having a dog can help children develop kindness, understanding and respect for living things. Pets can improve a child's social skills with people and caring for a pet can encourage responsibility.

Because of this many families have dogs. Children will quickly learn to treat your dog as part of the family but it is important that you teach your child to stay safe around your dog so that both of them are protected.

This leaflet will help you to learn about dog behaviour so your children stay safe and your dogs stay happy.

# What does a happy dog look like?

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**A dog who wants to meet you will look happy.**

1

Dog has a relaxed body posture, smooth hair, mouth open and relaxed, ears in natural position, wagging tail, eyes normal shape.



2

Dog is inviting play with bottom raised, smooth hair, high wagging tail, eyes normal shape, ears in natural position, may be barking excitedly.



3

Dogs weight is distributed across all four paws, smooth hair, tail wagging, face is interested and alert, relaxed mouth and open.



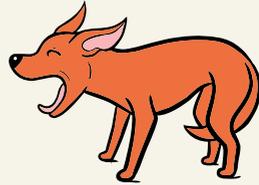
# What does a worried dog look like?

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**These dogs are telling you that they are uncomfortable and don't want you to go near them.**

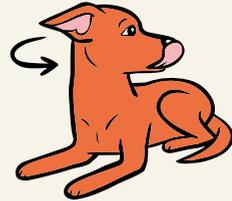
1

Dog is standing but body posture and head position is low. Tail is tucked under, ears are back and dog is yawning.



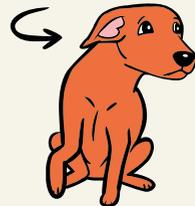
2

Dog is lying down and avoiding eye contact or turning head away from you and lip licking and ears are back.



3

Dog is sitting with head lowered, ears are back, tail tucked away, not making eye contact, yawning, raising a front paw.

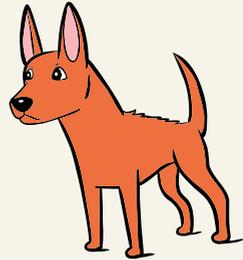


# What does an angry or very unhappy dog look like?

**These dogs are not happy and want you to stay away or go away.**

**1**

Dog is standing with a stiffened body posture, weight forward, ears are up, hair raised, eyes looking at you – pupils dark and enlarged, tail is up and stiff, wrinkled nose.



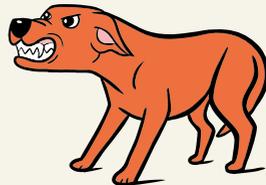
**2**

Dog is laid down covering, ears flat, teeth showing, tail down between legs.



**3**

Dog is standing with body down and weight towards the back, head is tilted upwards, mouth tight, lips drawn back, teeth exposed, eyes staring, ears back and down, snarling.





# The 6 Golden Rules

for keeping your child safe and your dog happy

1

Never leave your child alone in the same room as a dog, even your own.



2

Teach your child never to approach dogs when they:

- ▶ are eating or have a treat
- ▶ have a toy or something else they really like
- ▶ are sleeping
- ▶ are unwell, injured or tired
- ▶ are blind or deaf.

3

Teach your child to be kind and polite to dogs. Don't let your child climb on dogs, pull their ears or do anything you wouldn't allow them to do to another child.



4

Teach your child how to play nicely with your dog. For example, your child can teach your dog some really fun tricks like shake a paw, play dead, or roll-over.



5

Supervise your child when they're with your dog – if your dog looks unhappy, let him/her go somewhere they feel safe and happy.



6

Never allow your child to approach a dog they don't know, for example when out in the park.



**TOP TIP**

We all need a break sometimes – give your dog a cosy spot in a quiet room where they can have their own space. Teach your child to leave your dog alone when they're in their private spot.



**Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals**

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