

DOGS DON'T BITE OUT OF THE BLUE

A very high percentage of dog bites could be prevented if people would just stop making eye contact with a dog and going into its space.

Just think how you would feel if a stranger locked eyeballs with you and walked right into your personal space. You would feel uncomfortable to say the least even if the person was someone you had met before. You certainly would not want the person to stroke the top of your head.

To canines, eye contact coupled with movement is like talking is to us. So, when we make eye contact and approach a dog that does not know us well or at all, the dog can easily conclude that we are challenging its leadership or intend it harm. If the dog concludes that you are a threat, it is apt to use its only line of defense – its mouth. To keep ourselves, our children and our canine friends safe, here is what we need to do:

- 1) Do not make eye contact with the dog or talk to it. This avoids putting pressure on the dog.
- 2) Stop well away from the dog/its owner and ask if you can meet the dog. If the owner says the dog is not friendly, is nervous or is in training, thank him and move on.
- 3) If the owner gives you permission to interact with his/her dog, ask for the dog's name and call it to you. By coming to you, the dog is showing you it is comfortable with you and is also subordinating itself to you. If the dog does not come, this indicates it still is not comfortable with you, so take a rain-check.
- 4) Make sure the dog comes all the way to you (or your child) so you do not have to move into its space. Brief eye contact is okay, but do not stare into the dog's eyes. Give the dog a chance to interact with you and sniff a bit. Then, you can give the dog some scratching behind the ear. Move slowly and let the dog see what you are doing. Do not put your hand directly over the dog's head from the front, as this can be read as dominance by the dog. If your child is too young to follow your guidance, it will be best to just let your child see the dog.
- 5) Keep your face away from the dog's face. If you get your face too close, you may startle the dog into a quick bite. This happened to Kyle Dyer, KUSA Anchor in Denver while on-air. So, be especially careful when having a small child meet a large dog, and be sure to keep your child's face away from the dog's face.

A dog with a wagging tail is simply in a heightened state. This can mean that the dog would like to meet you or might be afraid of you. Almost all dog bites are delivered out of fear. You can happily interact with most dogs by following the above steps, and by avoiding the dogs who are afraid enough to deliver a bite. Please remember that it's what we do that counts, not what the dog does.

Thanks so much to Doggone Safe www.doggonesafe.com for use of their image!

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Calls are always on the house with no strings attached.

Dogs Don't Bite "Out of the Blue."
Many bites can be prevented if people learn to read a dog's body language.

	This dog's whole body is wagging calmly and he is panting. He is happy to see you.		He is not yawning because he is tired. He is anxious and he hopes you will leave him alone.
	Her tail is high, her body is stiff and her mouth is closed. "I'm warning you. Back off!"		A tail tucked in, even if wagging a bit, means a very worried dog. "Please stay away from me."
	The tongue flick and the slow, stiff tail wag tell you this dog is very unsure. "Go away."		This dog is turning her head away in order to avoid conflict. She doesn't want to be bothered.
	The half-moon eye and the closed mouth tell you this dog is uncomfortable. "Leave me alone!"		The "freeze and stare" is a very dangerous sign! This dog will bite if you persist.

ENR For more information about dog bite prevention, visit www.doggonesafe.com **doggone safe**