

# Dog Bite Prevention Teacher's Lesson Plans

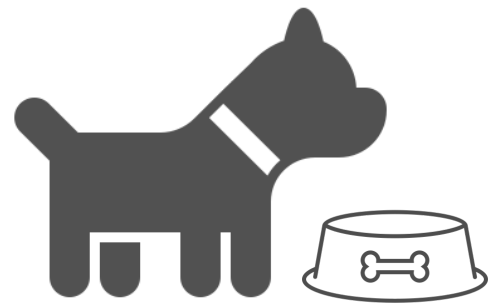
## for Preschools, Child Care Programs, and Head Start Programs

**Lesson time:** 1 hour

**Age level:** 4-6 years old

### Background for Teachers

Dog bites rarely happen unprovoked<sup>1</sup>. Children under the age of five are at the highest risk of sustaining severe injuries compared to other age groups, and often sustain injuries to the head and neck<sup>2</sup>. It is important that young children learn how to treat dogs and interpret their behavior to avoid dog aggressive behavior and bites. Bites can happen both with familiar dogs and strange dogs, though most bites



happen in the home and are provoked by actions that children may be unaware could upset dogs<sup>3</sup>. Bite risk can be lowered for children of all ages if they know strategies for approaching known dogs and avoiding potentially aggressive strange dogs.

### Preparation and Materials

- Plush or stuffed toy animal
- Projector or computer to play online videos
- Printed handout for parents (found under “Extra Resources”)

### Pre-Lesson Discussion (15 minutes)

- Ask students if they like dogs or if they have a dog at home.
  - How do they usually play with their dog?
  - What makes dogs happy, angry, scared?
- Ask the class to make a list of what they **should** do when they are around a dog.
- Ask the class to make a list of what they **should not** do when they are around a dog.

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<sup>1</sup> Dog Bite Prevention: Effect of a Short Educational Intervention for Preschool Children - PMC

<sup>2</sup> Dog bite injuries in children: a preliminary survey

<sup>3</sup> Dog bite injuries a preventable hazard?

- Explain that although we may love to be around dogs and other pets, **they have feelings and need their own space**. There are steps we can take to make sure we are treating dogs we know, and dogs we don't know, with respect.

## Video Lessons (5 min)

Videos should be played for students after the pre-lesson discussion. These videos introduce important concepts about interacting with both familiar and unfamiliar dogs that are also emphasized in the post-lesson discussion.

[Dogs You Know | Good Dog In A Box](#) (1:37 minutes)

[Strange Dogs | Good Dog In A Box](#) (1:48 minutes)

## Post-Lesson Discussion (20 minutes)

Make sure to cover the topics underneath each bullet point as you discuss with students.

- Ask students what **behaviors might make a dog angry**.
  - Avoid yelling, running, hitting or making sudden movements toward the dog.
  - Never squeeze dogs too tight, drop them, fall on them, or jump on them.
  - Do not tease dogs by taking their toys, food or treats, or by pretending to hit or kick.
  - Never pull a dog's ears or tail, climb on or try to ride dogs.
  - Avoid bothering a dog when it's asleep, eating, or taking care of puppies.
  - Never take a toy or bone away from a dog or play tug of war with a dog.
  - Don't try to drag a dog around. Don't try to dress up a dog.
  - Never crowd a dog or back it into a corner.
- Ask students to list **safe ways** to play with dogs.
  - Kids should scratch the dog on the chest or the side of the neck. Don't hug or kiss a dog on the face.
  - When feeding a dog, put the treat in your palm with your fingers and thumb held close together. Never feed a dog a treat with your fingers.
- Ask students what they should do if they come across a **strange dog**.



- If the owner is with the dog, always ask the owner for permission to pet their dog.
- Avoid unknown dogs. If you see a dog you don't know and it's wandering around loose and unsupervised, avoid the dog.
- "Be a tree" if a strange dog approaches – teach kids to stand still, like a tree. Trees are boring and the dog will eventually go away. This works for strange dogs and anytime the family dog gets too frisky or becomes aggressive.

## Demonstrate

### Greeting a friendly dog (5-10 min)

Explain that dogs greet people using their eyes, ears, and especially their noses. Dogs need to become familiar with you before petting them, which they do by sniffing.

- Using a plush dog, have students take turns slowly bringing a fist up to the nose of the dog, but not touching the nose.
- If no stuffed animals are available:
  - Ask students to pair up, one pretending to be a dog, and the other greeting the dog.
  - Students can practice slowly bringing a fist up to the nose of the "dog."

### Avoiding aggressive dogs (5 min)

When encountering a strange or aggressive dog, students should stand still and look down until the dog gets bored and goes away.

- Demonstrate for students how to "be a tree." Stand still, look down at your feet, and keep your hands close to your body. Emphasize that it is important not to run.
- Ask students to pair up, one pretending to be the strange dog.
- Students should stand facing each other. The "dog" should try to make the other student laugh or move, but without touching them. The student should practice being a tree. Switch after 2 minutes.



## Extra Resources

For parents: [Dog Bite Prevention for Parents](#)

[Dog Bite Prevention | ASPCA](#)

[7 Tips on Canine Body Language | ASPCApro](#)