

The ABC's of Dog Safety

Ask permission.

Ask "May I pet your dog?" before you touch a dog. Always ask, even if you know the dog, even if you think the dog looks friendly.

Be a tree.

Stand still with arms at your side. If the dog does not come closer, do not touch. If the dog comes close to you, then the safest place to pet is the chin or chest.

Chin or chest is where you should pet.

Do not hug or kiss a dog or hold your hand out toward his nose (the dog can already smell you). Those motions can scare a dog and lead to a bite. If the dog comes close to you, stroke under the chin or on the chest. If he doesn't come close, count his spots or admire his collar, but don't touch.

If any dog, even your dog, has something in his mouth, leave him alone. Do not move closer or try to pet him. If you need help, ask a grown-up. If a dog is lying down (he may be sleeping or just resting), leave him alone. Do not move closer or try to pet him.

If a dog comes running up to you, pretend to be a tree, tall, still and quiet. Don't run or scream, that can excite the dog, leading to a bite. Stand still, look at your shoes, and be quiet. Most dogs lose interest and move along. When the dog is gone, back away and go tell an adult what happened.

For more information on how kids and their dogs can be safe and happy together, read:

Happy Kids, Happy Dogs: Building a Friendship Right from the Start by Barbara Shumannfang. Available anywhere books are sold and at your local library. For more safety tips visit www.topnotchdog.com.

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