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HOW TO INTERACT SAFELY WITH UNFAMILIAR DOGS

Your first meeting with an unfamiliar dog will determine if the dog will ever learn to trust you, and when a dog trusts you they will rarely, if ever, bite. Following the tips below will help you become “dog friendly”.

The DON'T List:

-  DO NOT approach a dog.....If a dog approaches you, turn your face and body away or completely turn your back.
-  DO NOT face a dog head on.
-  DO NOT run away.....If a dog runs towards you aggressively, turn your back, stay completely still until the dog is calmer, and slowly back away out of harms way.
-  DO NOT speak to a dog unless you are certain they are friendly.....Tail wagging is not necessarily a sign of friendship.
-  DO NOT yell, scream, or speak in a harsh deep voice.
-  DO NOT walk directly towards a dog in a straight line.
-  DO NOT move quickly.
-  DO NOT move closer towards a dog if you see signs of distrust. (See list of calming signals)
-  DO NOT bend over or extend your hand towards a dog.
-  DO NOT pet a dog's head or grab their collar.
-  DO NOT pet a dog roughly with your hand going back and forth.
-  DO NOT reach over to pet a dog on the far side of their body.



The DO List:

-  DO offer food treats.....Not all dogs will take food from you but, if they do, when you offer food it should be in a hand held by your side or dropped gently to the ground. Always leave a treat before you go so the dog associates your visit with something pleasant.
-  DO make an arched approach when walking in the direction of a dog.



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- 📖 DO walk slowly when approaching.
- 📖 DO turn your head and look away.
- 📖 DO let a dog approach you first.....Never try to force your friendship on a dog.
- 📖 DO face a dog with your body and head turned to the side.
- 📖 DO yawn.....This reassuring gesture can work wonders to calm an agitated or worried dog.
- 📖 DO use a higher pitched “sing-songy” tone of voice when speaking.
- 📖 DO pet a dog under the chin or on the front of the chest very gently.
- 📖 DO pet a dog on the side nearest to you.....Reaching over the body causes a dog to be anxious.

CALMING SIGNALS DOGS USE WHEN THEY ARE ANXIOUS

Calming signals are a way of communication used by dogs to resolve conflicts, prevent aggression and reduce stress. These signals are used between dogs as well as between dogs and other creatures they may see as a threat. When a dog gives a calming signal, they expect a signal back — a change in behavior. When the dog doesn't get a friendly signal back, they may become more stressed or frightened and possibly bite. Therefore people should learn to use these calming signals whenever they meet an unfamiliar dog. For example, if you continue to approach a dog that is giving clear signs that they distrust you without giving a signal back to them that you mean no harm, they will feel the need to escalate their defense. By observing the dog's signs when you approach, and “answering” them with a non-threatening response, the dog is more apt to feel that you mean no harm. The more stressed the dog gets, the more likely you are to get bit.

Dog language consists of a variety of signals using body, face, ears, tail, sounds, movement, and expression. The primary calming signals that dogs use are listed below. We can use some of these same signals to “answer” a dog to show them we are not a threat.

- 📖 Averting their eyes. No direct eye contact or staring.
- 📖 Turning their heads or bodies away from the conflict.
- 📖 Licking their nose or lips.
- 📖 Yawning.



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- 📖 Freezing their body movements until the conflict has moved on.
- 📖 Walking slowly or using slow body movements.
- 📖 Walking in a curve or arched line towards an animal or person.
- 📖 Getting in a play stance.
- 📖 Sitting down.
- 📖 Lying down.
- 📖 Sniffing the ground.
- 📖 Physically splitting up a group.
- 📖 Wagging their tail.
- 📖 Pawing the ground.
- 📖 Sneezing.
- 📖 Urinating.

Suggested Reading: *ON TALKING TERMS WITH DOGS: CALMING SIGNALS* by Turid Rugaas Legacy Publications, 1997. Paperback, 36 pages \$10.00, or the *CALMING SIGNALS BOOK/VIDEO SET* by Turid Rugaas, \$35.90.