



Regina
Humane
Society

Pre-K Lesson “Making Friends with Dogs”

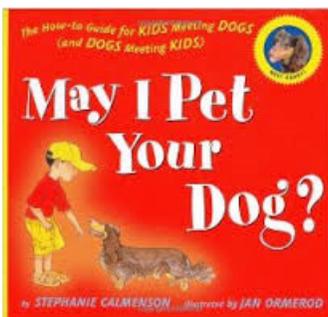
Dogs are an important part of our lives and teaching students the right and wrong ways to communicate with dogs benefits everyone. According to the Canada Safety Council, children are the most common victims of dog bites and are more likely to be severely injured. Children unfamiliar with safe behaviour around dogs can easily enter or create a situation where an otherwise “friendly” animal may bite (i.e. approaching a dog that is eating, hugging a dog, taking away a dog’s toys or treats, etc.). If dog bite prevention and simple safety rules are taught early and often, both in school and at home, many dog bites will be avoidable.

Objectives

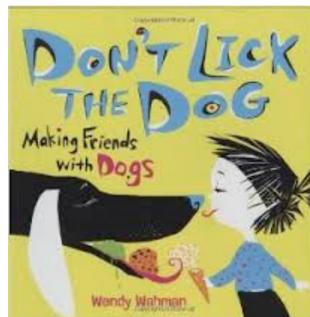
- Students will understand the importance of kindness and respect for animals.
- Students will learn the proper way to interact with dogs.
- Students will learn how to meet dogs safely.

Procedure

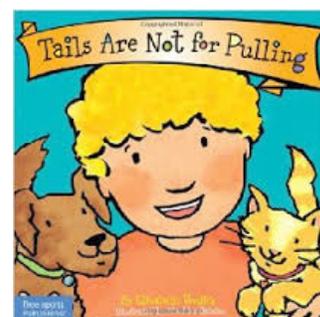
This lesson is intended to introduce students to the proper way to interact with pets, particularly dogs, in order to encourage safe behaviour around all animals. Begin by explaining that you are going to read a story to the class about how to be kind to dogs. Read one of the following story books:



“May I Pet Your Dog”
By Stephanie Calmenson



“Don't Lick The Dog”
By Wendy Wanman



“Tails Are Not For Pulling”
By Elizabeth Verdick



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Meeting Rosie, the puppet puppy

Introduce Rosie, the puppet puppy, to the class. Explain that Rosie is going to help them learn the safest way to meet pets, especially dogs, for the first time. Remind students to listen carefully because you will be asking for helpers to show the class how to meet a dog safely.

Step 1: Ask first

Explain that you must ALWAYS use your words and ask permission before petting anyone’s dog. Some dogs do not like strangers, kids, people in uniform, men, women, etc. Only the dog’s owner will be able to tell you if their pet is friendly or not. Let’s practice using our words together. Repeat after you: “May I pet your dog, please?”

Step 2: Introduce yourself

If the owner says it is okay to pet their dog, you must introduce yourself first. Ask “How do animals introduce themselves to each other?” (they sniff each other). Remind students that dogs need to smell you and get to know you before you pet them.

Roll your fingers into the palm of your hand with the knuckles up and hold it out to demonstrate to children the best way for a dog to smell you. Explain that it is difficult for dogs to smell fingers one at a time because they are pointy and you may poke them in the nose! Instruct children to always roll their fingers into the palm of their hand when offering it to a dog to smell. Have them practice doing this.

Step 3: Pet under the chin

Once the dog has sniffed your hand, you can try petting him. Explain that the safest place to touch a dog for the first time is under the chin. This lets the dog get to know you before petting further. Doing this also ensures that your face will be the greatest distance from the dog in case he is not friendly. For example, if a dog does growl at first touch, you can easily back away carefully from the dog. It also ensures that the dog meets you from the front and that a child does not try to hug the dog in first contact. Ask students to demonstrate on themselves where to pet a dog for the first time. Encourage students to scratch under their chins.

Have students role play with Rosie to reinforce these steps. Ask if anyone would like to show the class the safest way to meet Rosie. Continue until each student has had a turn.

Never Hug a Dog

Explain that hugging a dog is never acceptable. When you hug a dog, you are putting your face directly beside the dog’s mouth. If the pet is frightened because he does not know you, or if someone steps on his tail, he can react with a bite. Ask children how they would feel if a stranger came up to them and hugged them!

Safe Behaviour Around Stray Dogs

Depending on the age and level of your students, you may want to discuss safe behaviour around stray dogs. Explain to the students that not every dog will be accompanied by an owner. Some dogs are alone or lost or do not have a family. Ask the students if they have ever met a stray dog on the street or in the playground. Tell the students that the way they react to a stray dog may keep them from being attacked or injured.

Stand Like a Tree

Trees are boring to dogs. If a stray dog comes up to them, tell students that they should stand like a tree. If you are a tree, the dog will just sniff you and go away. After all, when was the last time you saw a dog chasing a tree?

Stand like a tree in any of these situations:

- A strange dog comes near you (even if he seems friendly)
- A dog is making you feel uncomfortable, worried, or scared
- A dog is chasing you
- If your own dog or a friend’s dog is acting too excited

It’s easy to stand like a tree. Just stop, fold in your branches (bring your arms down to your sides and stand with your legs together), watch your roots grow (look down and do not start into the dog’s eyes), and count in your head. Count to the highest number you know and then start back at one again until the dog leaves or help comes.

Ask for a volunteer to demonstrate, and remind students that most dogs do not intend to scare or bite, but they do like to investigate new people. Point out that the volunteer is not very interesting to a dog. They aren’t waving their arms in the air, yelling, jumping, or staring at the dog. If you can, students always enjoy if you act out these gestures as you describe them. It is also proof positive that someone standing like a tree is infinitely less interesting than someone acting out these gestures. These behaviours make some dogs very excited or angry, possibly causing them to jump or bite.

In most cases, if the child is standing like a tree the dog will either avoid the child altogether or simply sniff them or walk away. If the dog remains, students can be instructed to move away from the dog backwards or sideways using “baby steps.” Moving backwards or sideways allows the child to see what the dog is doing. If a child turns their back on an angry dog, they will be unable to see the actions of the dog.

Lie Like a Log

Ask one of the students to lie like a log (face down on the ground, hands clasped behind their neck, elbows covering their ears). Explain to the students that in extremely rare cases, a dog may knock them to the ground and attempt to bite them. If this is the case, children should lie like a log. This position protects the face, neck, ears and is also a fairly non-threatening posture to a dog.

Final Discussion

Distribute the Making Friends with Dogs coloring page. Encourage students to make their papers as colorful as possible.

Making Friends with Dogs



If you have permission from the owner, close your hand. Let the dog sniff the back of your hand.

**If a strange dog comes near you and the owner is not there,
stand like a tree.**

