

Preventing Dog Attacks

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With [153.000 strays on the streets of San Antonio](#), you are bound to run into a loose dog. Luckily most of them are not out to harm us. Many of them are looking for help. See my post on rescuing [here](#).

Although most dogs don't want to attack, it is still wise to be cautious. Especially if you jog or bike.

How can you reduce your chances of getting bitten?

Prepare

Practice

Fire fighters, law enforcement officials, military personnel, etc... practice for real life threats. We should do the same. If we prepare before something happens, we will be better equipped to

deal with a stressful situation. We might be able to think and act instead of simply reacting.

Go over a plan in your head. And go over it often - revising as necessary. Better yet, physically practice pointing your walking cane or a can of citronella spray at a stuffed dog. Have a friend burst out of a front door and run towards as you jog down the street, etc..

Plan

Survey The Area

As you walk, run or bike your route, take a close look at the area. Are there cars with open doors that you can get into? Are there pickup trucks with beds you can jump into? Are there any trees you can climb, fences you can jump over?

Dress Appropriately

Wear sturdy shoes.

You might need to run or climb.

You might be less likely to fall

You might need to kick

You might be less likely to injure your ankle in a fight or flee situation

You might need to run into thick brush

Wear safe clothes

If it's cool enough, wear thick clothing. A bite through jeans is going to cause less damage than a bite directly on skin.

Don't wear things dangling from your neck that the dog might grab on to.

Carry Protection

See my posts on [how to deal with loose dogs](#) for advice on carrying a walking cane, citronella spray, umbrella, etc..

Get Your Shots

Be sure that your tetanus vaccination is up to date.

Practice Avoidance

Don't walk, jog, or bike by the houses of known irresponsible pet parents. People who:

- Leave their dogs outside, either completely loose or unattended behind a low or unsecured fence
- Let their dogs out in the front yard without a leash
- Leave dogs outside unattended behind invisible fences (these can fail)
- Leave dogs tethered unattended (dogs can chew through or snap restraints)

Be Courteous

By being courteous to dog walkers, you might save yourself from getting bitten.

Dogs who are surprised (especially surprised by quick movements) are much more likely to bite.

If you are biking or jogging and see a human and dog walking up ahead, calmly let them know that you are behind them (Many will be happy to move over if they know you are there), then slow down and go around.

Note the length of the leash and give yourself room to move around. i.e. if the dog is on a 6 foot leash, take at least an 8 foot arc to move around the pedestrians. If the dog is on a retractable leash, move away at least 40 feet to be safe.

Be Vigilant

Leave the Ipod at home. Turn off the cell phone. You want to keep your eyes and ears open. If you are wearing earbuds, you might not hear a loose dog running up to you. If you are talking on the phone, you might not notice the loose dog coming around the corner.

Constantly scan the area for trouble.

If you are jogging and biking and see/hear a front door about to open or a garage door raising, move across the street just in case a dog rushes out. Also move out of the way if you see a gate opening or hear a dog jumping on a gate.

If You Are Accosted

Stop Moving

Dogs can get excited by movement. Sometimes simply stopping will be enough to make a dog stop approaching.

Unless you have a football field sized head start, it is unlikely that you can outrun a dog.

Be like a Tree

Stand very still. Arms at your side. Do not look directly at the dog. Once the dog calms down a bit, slowly walk backwards away from the dog. Do not turn your back on the dog.

While you are being still, start thinking back to your practice sessions. With your head remaining still, start moving your eyeballs around, looking for escape routes, weapons, blocking materials (bikes, chairs, etc..), other people to help, etc..

What if not moving doesn't help? The next few pieces of advice may or may not work. Might even make things worse. Depends on the human, the dog, the situation. **Consult a professional for more advice.** Jean Donaldson's book, [Fight](#) has some information on breaking up dog fights. Some of the information can be tailored to help ourselves as well.

Protect Yourself

Use any of the methods mentioned in my [loose dogs](#) posts. If possible, start with the least harmful thing - like citronella spray.

In addition to the methods listed, you can also look for things to "feed" the dog - anything to shove towards the dog's mouth - something for the dog to latch onto other than you.

If you fall or if you are taken down, roll into a ball, hands covering your face. Don't move about.

If your clothing is grabbed, consider removing the clothing and letting the dog have it while you attempt to make a getaway.

If you get bitten

If your skin gets broken - even a very minor injury, clean the wound then go to a doctor immediately. Infection is highly likely if antibiotics aren't administered.

Although the chance that you would contract rabies will be small, it is a real possibility and rabies is usually fatal if not treated early.

Report the incident to the authorities. Warn others in the area if possible.

Miscellaneous

Never Approach nor touch a dog without explicit permission from the dog's handler.

Even if the owner gives permission to pet, wait for the dog's permission. Invite the dog to walk towards you. If dog does not choose to walk towards you and if dog does not actively solicit petting by rubbing against you, do not pet

If the owner is encouraging or force the dog to approach you, do not pet. If the holding the dog still, do not pet

If the owner is holding the leash tightly, do not pet

This video has excellent examples of how to ask permission from the owner and dog and how to pet a dog: <http://www.video.clickertraining.com/free-49>

Related videos, articles

Correct way to meet a shy dog: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OpwOTXLpXaE>

Do not get in a dog's face: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SjtCJqxIKJk>

Do not offer your hand: <http://youtu.be/cOm5nuMVOvg>

Wrong way to approach and give treats: <http://youtu.be/hpSlzJ9PQr0>

Correct way to approach and offer treats: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O_hvbrqtJ60

Dr Sophia Yin - How to Greet a dog: <http://drsophiayin.com/blog/entry/how-to-greet-a-dog>

Dr Sophia Yin - Prevent Dog bites by greeting a dog properly:

<http://drsophiayin.com/blog/entry/preventing-dog-bites-by-learning-to-greet-dogs-properly>