

HOW TO APPROACH A DOG

Every dog has a different way of responding to people. Just like humans, some dogs are extroverts, while others can be shy and nervous.

Sometimes it's easy for us to see a cute dog and immediately want to touch them. However, some dogs may be scared of new people, so making sure we're interacting with them in a way that's calm and positive is really important.

Below are a few tips on how to safely approach a dog:

Always ask the owner

Some dogs may be nervous, over-excited, or in training. Whether the dog is on or off-lead, it's important that you ask the owner for permission first.

If you see a dog tied up outside a shop with no owner in sight, then it's best to leave the dog be.

Keep calm

Don't stare, shout at, or loom over a dog – all these things can seem confrontational to a dog, which might cause them to react or be afraid. Approach side on in a calm, gentle manner.

Know the signs

If, when you approach a dog, they start to turn away or look tense, it's very likely that they are not comfortable having you in their space. It's best to stop if the dog displays any signs that they're uncomfortable.

To approach a dog appropriately:

- If it's a small dog, crouch down to the dog's level. Always have one foot flat on the ground so you're able to quickly get up if needed.
- If it's a larger dog, approach side on with your hands by your side and encourage the dog towards you if they are comfortable.

At this point, some dogs may become over-excited and might jump up, invade your personal space and lick you. The best thing to do is remain calm and stand up.

If the dog continues to jump up, then turn away and fold your arms. By doing this, you become boring to the dog and it'll be easier for the owner to collect them or calm them down.

Easy does it

Allow the dog to approach and sniff your hand without reaching your hand out to them. If the dog is comfortable being in your space and showing relaxed body language, you can try to stroke them.

Gently reach out with the back of your hand and stroke the dog's shoulders, chest or under their chin, which most dogs enjoy.

Never go over a dog's head first, as they cannot see your hand and may feel intimidated by this. Dogs also don't appreciate hugging as this is quite restrictive and it feels like they can't get away.

After stroking the dog for a few seconds, gently move your hand away. If the dog wants more, they will lean into you or nudge you for more. If they don't want any more attention, that's OK too, as listening to the signs the dog showed will have given them a positive experience when meeting new people.