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Dog bites are relatively common.

Even though dog bites are relatively common, full-blown attacks are not.

It is important to know, however, what to do in the unlikely event an attack happens.

What type of behaviour do dogs normally exhibit before attacking?

There is no one size fits all when it comes to the signals a dog gives before attacking, and while the signs of aggression such as growling, snarling, baring teeth and lunging are easy to read, there can also be signs that are so subtle, such as a moment of tension or a small freeze, these are easily missed.

What do I do if I find myself in a situation with a dog that is aggressing towards me?

- Avoid eye contact
- Turn your body slowly to the side

- Cross your arms
- Completely ignore the dog
- Be still for a short period then move slowly away
- Try to get to a place where there is a barrier between you and the dog.

If that does not work, what do I do?

- Stay completely still.
- Without shouting, calmly ask someone nearby to help.
- If you are in the ground slowly curl into a ball on your knees with your hands clasped behind your neck protecting your head and throat.

Should I try to be friendly with the dog, talking to it in a soft voice?

- Completely ignore the dog. The more boring you are, the less likely he is to attack.
- The more you attempt to communicate the greater the chances are of provocation.

Is spraying pepper spray in a dog's face a good idea?

If the dog is not yet attacking you, spraying him with pepper spray might be the trigger for an explosion.

As always, treating aggression with aggression only makes things worse.

What do I do if the dog lunges at me and begins to bite?

- Find a barrier that you can put between you and the dog – a purse, rolled-up jacket or a stick and try to redirect the dog's bites onto that item.
- Find higher ground and try to move to a position of height away from the dog.
It is much harder for him to bite effectively from below.
- Try not to scream as this could antagonize the dog further.

- Cover the dog's head with a shirt or blanket so that he cannot see.
If you block his eyesight for a moment, it might provide you a window to escape.
- In the very rare event a dog is viciously mauling you (as opposed to just trying to bite or landing a few scattered bites), curl up into a ball on the ground, protecting your head and neck while waiting for help.
If you are all alone, you are unlikely to get the dog off you by yourself until the dog loses interest.
- Try as best you can to not scream or otherwise antagonize the dog further.

If a dog is attacking you, is hitting it with a stick a good idea?

Hitting the dog will only heighten the dog's already sky-high level of adrenaline and energy.

Try to act as calmly as possible. If you are witnessing a fight you can end it by covering the dog's head with a blanket, jacket or shirt.

Blocking a dog's vision will normally cause the dog to disengage.