

Walking Your Dog “Saying Hello” Politely

Walking your dog should be fun and enjoyable. Dogs need regular exercise and *appropriate* socialisation with other dogs. Like people, dogs make choices about which dogs they like, don't like and who they wish to play with.

A simple and friendly way of avoiding confrontation with dogs (and people) you don't know is to pop your dog back on lead until you get close enough to ask the dog's owner if it's OK for the dogs to meet.

Shaking Hands – Doggy Style

Dogs should meet by “shaking hands” dog style. Dogs that have been well socialised with other dogs, meet politely by avoiding eye contact, moving slowly around each other and sniffing bottoms. There may then be an invitation to play, such as a low bow by one of the dogs. Lots of space around the dogs will ensure one doesn't feel cornered which may result in a fearful response. Happy voices and encouragement from owners when dogs are behaving politely, will encourage the dogs to feel at ease and behave in a friendly manner.

Some dogs don't want to play or meet others and may growl. This is a message to the other dog to “go away” – better a growl than a bite! Well mannered dogs listen and move on. Like people, dogs don't like all dogs and may respond appropriately to a “rude” dog by growling or making a lot of noise. Generally it's just that, a lot of noise. Dogs really don't want to fight, unless they are pushed, but it's better not to allow it to happen.

What is Rude Behaviour?

Dogs that have not learned how to “shake hands” through appropriate socialisation with other dogs and have not been trained, may behave rudely by charging up to dogs, jumping on them, barking etc. It's much the same as if we were walking in the park and approached by a loud stranger who threw his arms around us. We would not think that was “Saying Hello”.

Many dogs are ill or old and do not appreciate the enthusiastic behaviour of a young dog jumping all over them. I am sure we would all dread the thought of our grandparents being jumped on by young teenagers who were just “Saying Hello”.

Some dogs have had bad experiences whilst being walked on lead and are forever fearful of being approached by off lead dogs. If a dog on lead is worried and not able to get away it may respond aggressively to an unfamiliar dog. Many humans who have been assaulted or mugged from behind, find it very difficult to overcome the fear of people approaching from behind.

Often people cause dogs to react badly to each other. Dogs should never meet face to face on tight leads. We don't “say Hello” by putting our faces into that of another person. Remember to let them “Shake Hands” first.

Many small dogs that are fearful of bigger dogs may run up to dogs snarling and barking in their faces. Even the best behaved dog is bound to react adversely to a snarling snapping dog if pushed and the consequences may be serious.

Dogs have feelings, emotions and needs and are entitled to decide who they want to meet – just like us. Following the simple polite greeting method of “On lead until you meet” will ensure an enjoyable walk and you and your dog will make lots of friends.