

Bite Prevention Role Playing

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Students will role-play different situations involving meeting or handling animals.

Situation #1: How you should behave when animals are eating.

One student will use a dog or cat puppet and play the role of the animal. Another student will play the role of a human stranger. Pretend that the dog or cat is eating, and the human approaches the animal and takes the food away. Students will role-play what they think might happen in this situation. Discuss with students what could happen when a stranger takes food (or perhaps a toy) away from an animal.

Situation #2: Why you should handle animals gently.

A student will hold one of the puppets upside down or too tightly and role-play the animal's reaction.

Discuss with students how a kitten or puppy might feel if it was being held upside down. Would it try to escape and perhaps scratch or bite? How could students prevent this kind of reaction in their pet?

Situation #3: What to do when you meet an animal.

This situation involves three students. One will use a puppet and play the dog. Another will play the dog's owner. The third student will play the part of a friend. In this situation, the dog and owner are walking together and the friend meets them. Guide students through this activity and instruct them about how to meet an animal. Students will role-play the scene as follows: a) The friend should ask the owner if he or she can pet the animal. b) After the owner gives permission, the friend approaches slowly and quietly. c) The friend holds out his or her hand in a relaxed way with the palm down, and lets the dog sniff the hand. d) If the animal seems calm and unafraid, the friend may gently pet him or her.

Situation #4: What to do when an animal is angry.

In this situation, one student will use a puppet and play the role of the dog, and another will play the role of the human. The dog and person are near each other, and the dog is behaving in a hostile way. Instruct students about how to handle this situation, and allow students to role-play the process: a) The human should avoid looking the dog directly in the eyes, since the dog could consider eye contact as a prelude to attack. b) The person should talk quietly and back away from the dog slowly. c) In this type of situation, the person should never turn his or her back to the dog, since it might provoke an attack.

Situation #5: What can happen when you scare an animal.

In this situation, one student will use a puppet and play the role of the dog. A second student will play the role of the human. The human rushes around, moving fast, making a lot of noise. The dog responds by chasing the person, and perhaps biting him or her. Discuss with students the importance of being calm and respectful around animals, and explain that when an animal is frightened it may behave aggressively to defend itself.

The teacher should stress that this doesn't mean the animal is bad or mean, just frightened.

Follow-up quiz Dog Bites - How Much Do You Know?

Answer True (T) or False (F) to the following questions:

- _____ 1. Only stray dogs bite.
- _____ 2. It is OK for me to walk up to a friend's dog and pet her.
- _____ 3. A good way to be safe around dogs is to help them feel safe.
- _____ 4. If a strange dog comes up to me and looks like he wants to bite me, I should stare directly into his eyes.
- _____ 5. If a dog is wagging his tail, it is probably safe.
- _____ 6. I should stay away from dogs that are eating or sleeping