



**My dog
does not like
other dogs**

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What is aggressive behaviour?

Aggressive behaviour includes not only bites but also threats and snapping. While it may sometimes seem unexpected, dogs rarely bite 'out of the blue'; they will begin by acting evasively, but if this does not work or is not possible they might become tense and/or growl – this is a warning sign that a dog needs space and feels stressed or threatened. A dog uses a snap or bite as the ultimate strategy when it feels unable to avoid a perceived threat.

What are the signs that my dog doesn't like other dogs?

In most cases, a dog will show signs of anxiety before acting aggressively. If your dog tries to avoid other dogs (by walking away when free to do so, or turning their head if on the lead), creeps with their ears back or stands crouched with their tail tucked under, they are communicating their concern. If your dog feels unable to avoid close contact with another dog, they may growl to try to make the other dog give them space. Increased understanding and recognition of early signs of unease will do much to alleviate the risk of aggression and prevent escalation to snapping and biting.



Why is my dog fine around my other dogs?

Dogs are sociable animals by nature, and much like us they often form bonds with one another. There are many reasons why a dog may feel uncomfortable with unfamiliar dogs. It may be that your dog feels safe at home and has no need to avoid or confront your other pets. Even the generally positive experience of a walk can become stressful when a dog meets strangers.

Can I let my dog off the lead?

You should give careful consideration as to whether it is safe or appropriate for your dog to be off-lead if there is any risk of encountering other dogs. It can be difficult to have complete control over a dog that is off-lead and it is impossible to know how other dogs will behave. For the safety of your dog and others, a leather or heavy nylon lead is advised. A retractable lead may allow your dog to withdraw from an uncomfortable situation and avoid conflict but you should give careful thought to using one, especially if you have a large dog, as they are thin and can be difficult to manipulate.

Should I use a muzzle if I know my dog is going to be around other dogs?

Muzzle training is recommended for all dogs, and it is an essential requirement for aggressive dogs. This should begin in a stress-free environment, such as the home. As with all training, rewarding your dog (e.g. through praise and treats) will help them to accept the muzzle and not associate it with the negative emotions brought about by conflict with other dogs. You should use a muzzle whenever you may encounter another dog; this is as much for your dog's protection as for others'. It should be put on well in

advance so an association with meeting dogs is not made. Excellent videos showing how to make muzzle training enjoyable for your dog are readily available online.

What should I do if my dog attacks another dog?

Be calm. Try to pull them apart using the end of the lead, do not grab them by the collar or clip a lead on a dog that is already loose. If the dogs are not on a lead then try to insert a couple of broom handles or similar devices between them to lever them apart. Once you have separated the dogs, do not jerk the lead or reprimand your dog as this may provoke further aggression. Get your dog to a quiet place and give them time to calm down before touching them. Check your dog for injuries when they have calmed down and contact your vet if necessary.

Should I be worried that my dog will become aggressive with people?

An aggressive tendency towards other dogs does not mean your dog will become aggressive with people. However, you should aim to take precautions, specifically with small children, and be sure to monitor the dog's behaviour.

Will my own anxiety of encountering other dogs have a negative effect on my dog?

Owners can play a significant role in their dogs' behaviour. If your dog displays early signs of aggression on a walk, you may tighten up on the lead, displaying your own tense body posture. This tension is conveyed to the dog, who will likely mirror your anxiety. Conversely, if you remain calm and in control, your dog will feel safer and more confident.

Should I punish my dog?

Never. Punishment (physical or verbal) and harsh training methods may induce fear and anxiety in the dog, which can lead to further aggressive behaviour and should therefore be avoided.

What can my vet do to help?

Aggression may arise as a result of a physical condition, so your vet will perform a medical examination first and foremost. Your vet will also carry out a careful contextual evaluation of interactions that trigger stress and aggression. Together, you and your vet may be able to develop a treatment strategy, but depending on the severity of your dog's behaviour they may refer you to a specialist.

How do I manage my dog's behaviour?

Dogs are just as individual as us, so there is not one technique to manage aggression in all cases. Your first priority should be to prevent injury to your dog and others, and then to work on improving your dog's confidence around other dogs. If you are worried about your dog's behaviour, you may wish to seek help from a clinical animal behaviourist. Please discuss this with your vet – they will have your dog's medical history which could be important, and may refer you to a behaviourist.

Will my dog get better and how long will it take?

With proper management, your dog should improve but behaviour management takes time and has to be performed at the dog's pace. If the steps are too large, or occur too quickly, the techniques will not be effective.





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