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# Guest column: How to keep kids safe from dog bites

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Lisa DesatnikCommunity Press guest columnist

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Each year millions of dog bites are reported in emergency rooms across the country.

What is more troubling is that children are most likely to get bitten and most of those incidents occur from the family dog or a neighbor's dog.

These bites do not happen out of the blue. Dogs do not use human language. They use their bodies to tell us when they are happy, sad, frightened or angry. He may tell you he is content by having his mouth open and swaying his tail gently back and forth.

### 'My dog's hero' classes

Lisa Desatnik will be teaching children how to be their

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dog's best friend in free upcoming programs during May, National Pet Month.

During her "My Dog's Hero" program, kids will learn the basics of care tips, how to play appropriately and safely with their dog, and how to be their dog's teacher. The best age for kids to attend is 6 to 9, and parents are encouraged to stay.

Presentations will be given at:

- Tuesday, May 7, Hyde Park branch public library, 7 p.m.;
  - Saturday and Sunday, May 11 and 12, Petopolis Show at the Cincinnati Convention Center, several times each day;
  - Tuesday, May 14, Madeira branch public library, 7 p.m.
- For more information, visit [www.SoMuchPETential.com](http://www.SoMuchPETential.com).

He may tell you he is uncomfortable by yawning, looking away or closing his mouth and tensing his muscles. If he still cannot get you to leave him alone, he may snarl or growl as a last resort before finally needing to resort to a bite to get him his much needed space.

A dog will bite when there is a person or another animal within biting range after he has tried to communicate non-aggressively that he is not comfortable, but he hasn't been "listened to." Biting is the last resort. Unfortunately once a dog has learned that

biting is what gets the scary provocative stimulus to move away, he will begin to use that behavior more often.

Those bites can be prevented.

Socialization is so important from the moment you bring your dog or puppy home, setting him up to have nothing but positive experiences with a variety of people and other dogs in a lot of different environments. Equally important is learning how dogs communicate and how dogs like to be interacted with.

Parents should pro-actively supervise while teaching their children how to respect and empathize and play appropriately with their dog, as well as teaching their dog that good things happen around their children. By recognizing dog body language, parents can monitor their pet's stress and warning signs to take steps for redirecting either their kids or their dog from the situation.

Hugging, kissing, pinching, chasing, straddling, dressing in clothes, poking, lying or straddling on, or chasing are just some of the activities kids should not do with or around their dog. Children should never take anything – a toy, a shoe or a bone – from their dog.



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