



**Be safe**  
**Be kind**

**Learning about dogs  
and how to be safe  
around them**

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- **Can you remember the Be safe, Be kind rules?**
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# Notes for adults

**‘Be safe, Be kind’ introduces children to 4 dogs: Sam, Millie, Elsa and Buddy. Sharing the book, children learn that, just like people, dogs have feelings and individual personalities. While building empathy skills, ‘Be safe, Be kind’ introduces children to simple rules about how to behave safely and kindly around the dogs they share their lives with.**

## Share, Discuss, Re-read and Sing!

The book is designed to be shared, discussed, re-read and read again! The first time you share the book, your child(ren) may want to chat about Sam’s love of snoozing with his teddy; the next time they might be more interested in talking about why Elsa is scared of fireworks. This discussion is key, so if you don’t have time to finish the book at one sitting, don’t worry!

As you talk about Sam, Elsa, Buddy and Millie, encourage your child(ren) to make links with their own lives and their interactions with dogs. Support them to understand that the ‘Be safe, Be kind’ rules apply to all dogs: their own dog, their nan’s dog, their childminder’s dog etc.

If you are a parent sharing the book with your child, discuss how your family can use the ‘Be safe, Be kind’ rules with the dogs you know. You might admit that you have learnt something new and are going to make a change to how you behave around dogs!

We’ve included some suggestions of things to talk about with your child(ren) while sharing ‘Be safe, Be kind’, and a few ideas for role play to help your child(ren) understand and remember the rules. Don’t worry; we’re not suggesting you use all of these every time you share the book! You might want to choose one rule to spend a bit more time on for each reading. At the end of ‘Be safe, Be kind’ there are three simple songs to sing together to help your child(ren) remember the key messages. (They use familiar

tunes, so no musical expertise is needed!) Look out for the sign which shows where a song is linked to one of the rules. There are also additional notes at the back of this book for parents and other adults, exploring ways to help children and dogs live happily together.

## Happy reading and remember to ‘Be safe, Be kind’!

### Dogs Trust

PS Early Years settings, please share the link to ‘Be safe, Be kind’ with your children’s parents, so they can share the book at home. Parents, please share the link family, friends and neighbours!

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**Meet the dogs  
and discover the**

**Be safe, Be kind**

**rules with discussion  
and role-play ideas**



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## Be Safe, Be Kind rule

## Discussion ideas

Select based on your child(ren)'s level of understanding.

## Roleplay ideas

You will need a soft toy dog.

## Notes



### If a dog is sleeping, leave them alone.

- How would you feel if somebody woke you up when you were asleep?
- Do you know any adults who are grumpy if you wake them up?
- Where does your dog like to sleep?

- React grumpily to somebody waking you up (e.g. saying "Leave me alone! I'm tired!" with a cross face.)
- Move quietly away from the soft toy dog while it is sleeping in its bed.
- Move quietly away from the soft toy dog while it is snoozing somewhere else (e.g. on a chair.)

It is important for children to understand that we should leave our dogs in peace wherever they are sleeping or resting, not just when they are in their bed.



### Stay quiet around dogs.

- Why do you think Elsa doesn't like fireworks?
- Are you scared of fireworks? Or something else that is noisy?
- Can you think of anything else that makes a loud noise that might be scary for dogs?

- Be scared of something noisy (e.g. put your hands over your ears and frown.)
- Play noisy games in a different room, away from the soft toy dog.
- Play quiet games, or read a book, in the same room as the soft toy dog.

This rule is not about being silent around dogs, just keeping calm and reasonably quiet!



### If you want to stroke a dog, you need to ask.

- Could we tell that Elsa likes children and Millie doesn't by looking at them?

- Practise saying "Please can I stroke your dog?" and waiting for an answer (which might be "No, sorry, he doesn't want to be stroked.")
- Act out the process of waiting for the soft toy dog to sniff you, then stroking it gently on the side.

Children can assume that other dogs will behave in the same way as their own dog. It is important that they understand that all dogs are different and that we can't tell if dogs are friendly based on how they look. In general, Dogs Trust would not encourage children to stroke dogs that they meet out and about. In most cases, the best option is to leave these dogs to enjoy their walk.

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## Be Safe, Be Kind rule

## Discussion ideas

Select based on your child(ren)'s level of understanding.

## Roleplay ideas

You will need a soft toy dog.

## Notes



### If a dog takes your toy, tell an adult.

- If you were playing with a toy and somebody tried to take it from you, how would you feel? What would you say/do?
- How might a dog feel if you took a toy away from them?
- What could we do to stop our dog from stealing toys?

- React to somebody trying to take your toy (e.g. saying "No! I'm playing with it now! You can have it later" with a cross face.)
- Practise saying "Mum / Dad the dog's got my toy."
- Tidy up all the children's toys so the dog can't pick them up.

Be careful not to encourage your child(ren) to shout for help from Mum or Dad (see the rule about being quiet around dogs!) For advice on how the adult should get the toy back from the dog, see the notes at the end of the book.



### If a dog sniffs you, just stand still.

- If a dog tries to sniff you and you move around or shout, how might the dog feel?

- Be a dog sniffing to learn about the world.
- Practise standing still, with your arms crossed across your chest, when the soft toy dog sniffs you.

This advice may be most useful for children who are nervous around dogs.



### If a dog is eating, leave them alone.

- How would you feel if somebody disturbed you when you were enjoying your favourite food?
- What might a dog think if we go near them when they are eating?

- React grumpily when you think somebody is going to take away your favourite food (e.g. saying "Go away! I'm eating and it's my favourite!" with a cross face.)
- Walk quietly away from the soft toy dog when it is eating from its bowl.

It can be difficult for children to understand that, while many humans enjoy hugs, dogs can feel trapped by them. Support your child(ren) to think of different ways to show they love their dog. A snuggle on the sofa is a good example, as long as the dog is free to move away whenever they choose to.



### If you stroke a dog, remember to use kind hands.

- Which people do you like to hug?
- Why might a dog not enjoy hugs?

- Hug somebody you love with a huge smile on your face.
- Stroke the soft toy dog gently counting 1,2,3. Then stop, and watch to see if the dog wants more. (If they do they will move toward you; if they have had enough they will move away.)

# Be safe Be kind

Learning about dogs and how to be safe around them

**We see dogs at the park,  
dogs in the street,  
dogs at the beach...  
There are dogs **everywhere!****

**And, just like us,  
all dogs are different.**

**Turn the pages to meet some  
dogs, and learn how to be safe  
and kind around dogs.**



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**This is**  
**Sam**



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**Sam  
likes**



**Playing with his friends**



**Rolling in the snow**



**Sleeping with his teddy**

**Sam does  
not like**



**Being woken up**

**Just like people, dogs  
do not like to be woken up.  
If a dog is sleeping,  
leave them alone.**

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**This is  
Elsa**



**Be safe  
Be kind**

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**Elsa likes**



**Children**



**Playing with her toys**



**Walks in the woods**

**Elsa does not like**



**Fireworks**

**Dogs can get scared by loud noises.  
Stay quiet around dogs.**

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**This is**  
**Millie**



**Be safe**  
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**Millie  
likes**



**Cats**



**Playing with her ball**



**Walks on the beach**

**Millie does  
not like**



**Children**

**Some dogs get scared if  
children stroke them.  
If you want to stroke a  
dog, you need to ask.**

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# **This is Buddy**



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# Buddy likes



Swimming



Splashing in mud



Stealing toys

# Buddy does not like



Things being taken away

**Dogs do not like having things taken away from them. If a dog takes your toy, tell an adult.**

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# Saying **hello** to a dog

**1** Ask your adult.

**2** Ask the dog's owner.

Look! There's Jan with Sam. Can I stroke him?

OK, but first you need to ask Jan.



Hi Jan. Please can I stroke Sam?

Let's see if Sam wants a stroke. If he does he will come and sniff you.



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**3** Stand still and let the dog sniff you.



**4** Stroke the dog gently on the side. Remember to use kind hands.

Thank you,  
Sam.



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# All dogs like **sniffing!**

**Dogs learn about  
the world by sniffing.  
If a dog sniffs you,  
just stand still.**



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# All dogs like **eating**

Going near dogs when they are eating can make them feel worried. If a dog is eating, leave them alone.



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# People like **hugs and kisses**

**Hugs and kisses  
are for people we love  
(and cuddly toys!)**



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# Dogs prefer a gentle stroke

If you stroke a dog, remember to use kind hands.



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# Can you remember the **Be safe, Be kind rules?**



**If a dog is sleeping,  
leave them alone.**



**If you want to  
stroke a dog,  
you need to ask.**



**Stay quiet  
around dogs.**



**If a dog takes  
your toy, tell  
an adult.**

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**If you stroke a dog,  
remember to use  
kind hands.**



**If a dog sniffs you,  
just stand still.**



**If a dog is eating,  
leave them alone.**

**Everybody should use  
the Be safe, Be kind rules.**

**That means adults too!**



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It is time to say **"Goodbye"**  
to the dogs we have met



**Goodbye**  
**Sam**



**Goodbye**  
**Millie**



**Goodbye**  
**Elsa**



**Goodbye**  
**Buddy**

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Turn the page and sing  
the **Be safe, Be kind** songs!



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# Hugs and kisses are for people **we love**

## To the tune of 'The Wheels on the Bus'

Hugs and kisses are for people we love,  
People we love, people we love.  
Hugs and kisses are for people we love,  
But NOT for dogs.

Add verses using the children's suggestions:

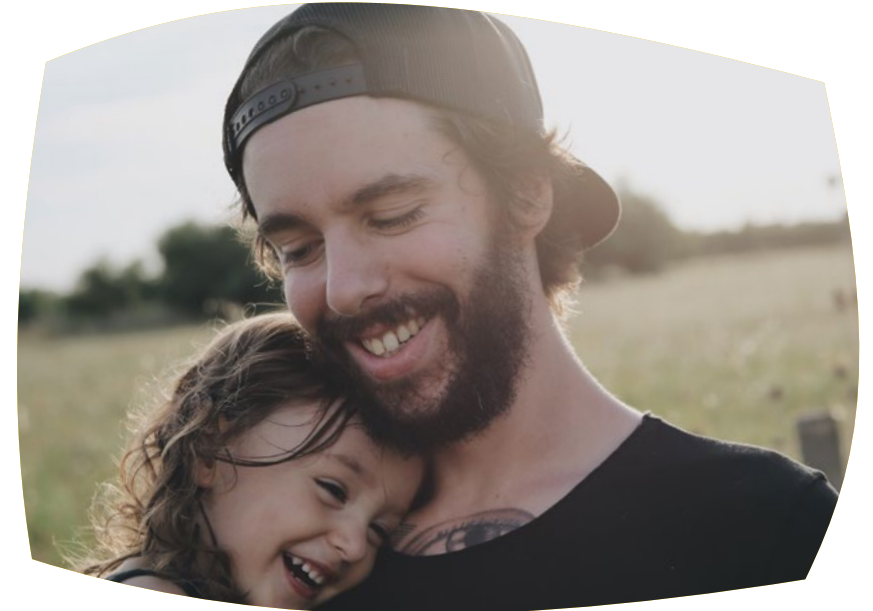
Hugs and kisses are for daddies we love...  
Hugs and kisses are for nannies we love...

Ask children to choose a friend to hug:

Hugs and kisses are for Liam and Ben...  
Hugs and kisses are for Freya and Tom...

(You may want to encourage children to ask their friend for permission before hugging them!)

Use signs to emphasise the words NOT and dogs in the final line of each verse. Finish by acting out how to stroke a dog gently on the back using kind hands.



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# Dogs like **eating!**

## To the tune of 'London Bridge is Falling Down'

If a dog is eating, leave them alone,  
Leave them alone, leave them alone.  
If a dog is eating, leave them alone,  
Dogs like eating!

Add verses using the names of dogs the children know (e.g., If Max is eating, leave him alone) and the different things their dogs like to eat (e.g., Eating a carrot, leave him alone.)

If a dog is sleeping, leave them alone,  
Leave them alone, leave them alone.  
If a dog is sleeping, leave them alone,  
Dogs like sleeping!

Add verses using the names of dogs the children know (if Bessie's sleeping, leave her alone etc). Include words with a similar meaning to 'sleeping.' (if Leo's resting leave him alone; If Milo's snoozing leave him alone.) With older children, extend the song to include different places that their dogs like eating or sleeping. (eating in the garden, leave them alone; Snoozing on the sofa, leave them alone; Resting on the carpet, leave them alone.)



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# If you want to stroke a dog and be his **friend**

**To the tune of ‘If you’re happy and you know it’**

If you want to stroke a dog and be his friend,  
If you want to stroke a dog and be his friend,  
If you want to stroke a dog, not a hedgehog or a frog,  
If you want to stroke a dog and be his friend.

If you want to stroke a dog, you need to ask

(First ask your adult, then ask the dog’s owner: “Please may I stroke your dog?”)

If you want to stroke a dog, please let him sniff

(To let the dog decide whether it wants a stroke, stand still with your hands by your sides and let the dog come and sniff you.)

Now it’s time to stroke the dog and be his friend,  
Now it’s time to stroke the dog and be his friend,  
Now it’s time to stroke the dog, not a hedgehog or a frog,  
Now it’s time to stroke the dog and be his friend.

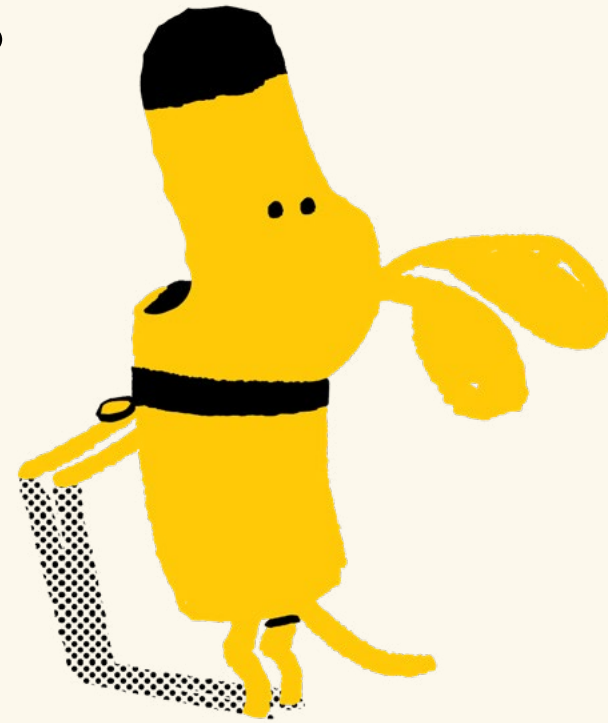
(Stroke the dog gently on its side. Remember to use kind hands!)



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# Extra information for parents and carers.



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# Information for parents and carers

**‘Be safe, Be kind’ has been written for pre-school children, and the rules have been kept simple and easy to understand for this age group. Below is some extra detail for parents and carers about each rule.**

## **If a dog is sleeping, leave them alone**

Dogs need a lot of sleep, and it is important that they have an area of their own where they can rest undisturbed. Their bed or crate should also be somewhere to retreat to if the hustle and bustle of family life is getting too much. (We all have moments when we need a bit of peace and quiet!)

Be clear with your own and visiting children that the dog’s bed or crate is their special place and a ‘dog only zone’, whether the dog is there or not. It is also important that children leave dogs in peace who are having a snooze or rest elsewhere in the house. Young children may not understand when a dog wants to be left in peace, so active adult supervision is essential.

## **Stay quiet around dogs**

Homes with small children can be noisy, busy places, and this can sometimes be stressful for our dogs. Encourage children to play more boisterous and energetic games in parts of the home separate from the dog, perhaps using a child-gate to separate the ‘noisy’ and ‘quiet’ parts of the house. If there are times of the day that are particularly hectic, help your dog out by giving them something to do that is quiet and calming, like playing with a food-releasing toy.

## **If you want to stroke a dog, you need to ask**

If your child asks you if they can stroke somebody else’s dog, in most situations, the best answer is “Not now, they’re busy.” It is best to leave dogs alone when they are having an exploratory sniff in the park and enjoying their important daily enrichment. When out and about with your child, chat about the dogs



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you see and what they are doing. Remind your child that they do not like being disturbed in the middle of a favourite game or book, and we should not disturb a dog who is enjoying their walk.

There are times when you may want to allow your child to stroke a dog - if you meet a friend in the park, for example. After getting permission from the dog's owner, it is important to 'ask the dog' as well. Help your child to stand still and watch to see if the dog chooses to come over and sniff you. It might be disappointing if the dog ignores you or backs away but reassure your child that the dog is just telling you that they are not in the mood to say 'hello'. If the dog does choose to interact, it is very important not to lean over their head or approach them from behind. Help your child to move calmly to the dog's side and stroke them gently on the shoulder or side. After 2 or 3 strokes, stand back and watch the dog's reaction - if they want more attention, they will quickly show you!

### **If a dog takes your toy, tell an adult**

Dogs can be curious animals who like to explore by picking things up in their mouths. They don't always know what is theirs and what is ours, so it is important to try and keep children's toys off the floor where the dog might find them. (Of course, with young children this is easier said than done!)

If your dog does pick up a child's toy, ignore them and move away. Pick up something that the dog is allowed to have (one of their own toys or a handful of treats) and interact with this yourself so that your dog can see what you are doing. Look as though you are having lots of fun with the dog toy, or slowly count out the treats onto the floor. The dog then has a choice: carry on holding the child's toy in their mouth and be ignored or drop it and come to see what you are doing. If they come to you, reward them with their own toy or the treats, before calmly picking up the child's toy which the dog has dropped. The general rule is to 'swap' or 'trade' rather than 'take' something from a dog.



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### **If a dog sniffs you, just stand still**

Although sniffing is normal behaviour for dogs, being sniffed by a dog can be worrying for some children. Noise or movement from the child is likely to make the dog even more interested, so the trick is to make yourself as uninteresting to the dog as possible! If a dog approaches you when you are out and about, help your child to stand still and ignore the dog. The dog will soon lose interest and leave you alone to find something new and interesting to sniff!

### **If a dog is eating, leave them alone**

Both adults and children should leave dogs in peace when they are eating their food, a treat or a chew. You might find it helpful to establish a routine to keep your child busy (for example, sharing a story or watching a DVD) while the dog is eating. This avoids any temptation to disturb the dog during what is probably one of their favourite times in the day!

### **People like hugs and kisses. Dogs prefer a gentle stroke**

Like us, dogs are social animals and spending time with both adults and children in the family is important to them. When interacting with our dogs, we need to be sure that they are relaxed and comfortable and can move away from us if they choose to. Humans might enjoy hugs with family or friends, but for dogs, hugs can be stressful as they remove this element of choice. A dog choosing to sit with a child on the sofa, and being able to jump down whenever they wish, is a great example of an affectionate and safe interaction.

Practise counting to 3 with your child as they gently stroke your dog with 'kind hands'. Then stop to see how the dog responds. If they move away, make sure your child does not follow them and explain that the dog is just asking for a bit of time to themselves. This is a great habit for the whole family to get into, to ensure your dog is enjoying quality time with their human family.



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# The adult's role

Your child will learn from what they see you do, as well as what you say to them, so be sure to model the behaviour around dogs that you want to see from your child. Have a chat with older children and other adults in the family, and make sure you are all keeping to the 'Be safe, Be kind' rules.

Spend a bit of time observing your dog in different situations and getting to know their own unique body language, especially how they show that they are starting to feel uncomfortable with a situation. Remember that young children cannot be expected to recognise these subtle signs, so it is vital that adults keep an active, watchful eye on all interactions.

For more information about canine body language see:  
[www.learnwithdogstrust.org.uk/safety/bedogsmart-parentsleaflet.pdf](http://www.learnwithdogstrust.org.uk/safety/bedogsmart-parentsleaflet.pdf)

## Where to get advice

If you have any concerns about your dog's behaviour, first check with your vet in case there is a medical cause, then consult a dog behaviour counsellor:  
[www.abtcouncil.org.uk/clinical-animal-behaviourists.html](http://www.abtcouncil.org.uk/clinical-animal-behaviourists.html)  
[www.asab.org/ccab-register](http://www.asab.org/ccab-register)

For advice on training your dog see:  
[www.dogstrustdogschool.org.uk/training/i-want-to-train-my-dog/training-videos/](http://www.dogstrustdogschool.org.uk/training/i-want-to-train-my-dog/training-videos/)  
[www.dogstrustdogschool.org.uk](http://www.dogstrustdogschool.org.uk)



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This book has been produced by Dogs Trust as part of their Early Years project. It aims to support children to develop empathy towards dogs and learn about safe behaviour around them. This work is part of the wider Dogs Trust 'Be Dog Smart' programme.

We also offer free school workshops for children in KS1\* and KS2. You can find more information and booking details at [www.learnwithdogstrust.org.uk](http://www.learnwithdogstrust.org.uk)

\*Booking conditions apply.

For more information on Dogs Trust Education see:  
[www.learnwithdogstrust.org.uk](http://www.learnwithdogstrust.org.uk)

If you would like any support with training your dog, Dogs Trust Dog School offers lots of practical advice and guidance and you can find more information at [www.dogstrust.org.uk/help-advice/training](http://www.dogstrust.org.uk/help-advice/training)

# Thank you for learning to Be safe, Be kind.



# Be safe Be kind

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