

© Creature Connections Behavior Alliance, LLC



Positive Reinforcement Dog Training
 13 McHugh Avenue, Billerica, MA 01821
 www.creatureconnections.net
 info@creatureconnections.net
 978-804.2498

HOW TO BREAK UP A DOG FIGHT - SAFELY

NOTE - These are only a few highlighted considerations regarding dog fights.

REASONS FOR DOG FIGHTS

NOTE: These are only a few reasons for dog fights. Learning more is a part of owning a dog.



<https://www.mass.gov/guides/massachusetts-city-and-town-ordinances-and-bylaws>

WARNING: IF YOUR OFF LEASH DOG INJURES A PERSON OR DOG, YOU ARE LIABLE FOR DAMAGES



OFF-LEASH DOGS LAWS

Massachusetts lets each town determine their leash law. It is against the law to have your dog off leash, even if the individual location says it's ok. IT IS NOT OK!



OFF LEASH

Dogs running up to other dogs can create fear or protective behavior. A dog on leash has no way of escape from being held increasing the fight or flight response.



RESOURCE GUARDING

Over toys, people, food can create friction between dogs. Even playing tug or with toys can easily escalate to a resource guarding scenario and can cause a dog to protect what it has. RESOURCE GUARDING IS A NATURAL BEHAVIOR.



FEAR

A fearful or unsure dog has increased stress hormones. Stressful situations can increase cortisol and adrenaline which may look like aggression, reactivity or excitement.



IMPULSIVE

Dogs that are young can be impulsive and not as experienced in ready other dogs body language. Fearful or reactive dogs may struggle with impulsive dogs running up to them.

MISTAKES WE HUMANS MAKE

NOTE: These are only a few mistakes. Not paying attention is a big part of missing the signals before a dog fight happens.

INTERPRETING DOG COMMUNICATION - AKA BODY LANGUAGE

LOWER STAGES OF STRESS/ANXIETY



NOT READING BODY LANGUAGE

Learning to read dog communication, is like learning a new language. It takes time and effort to really learn to read your dog and how they are feeling about a situation. Also learn general body language, so you can read other dogs as well.



WANTING YOUR DOG TO BE SOMETHING IT ISN'T

Sometimes we want something that our dogs can't give us. Some dogs like humans are introverts, some dogs are not comfortable around other dogs. We need to respect how our dogs feel about socializing.



NOT INTERVENING EARLY

Dogs can negotiate, ask permission, give signals to each other that say yes or no. If we see signals from one dog that says no thank you, and the other dog isn't understanding or picking up on the dog saying NO, we need to intervene.



SCREAMING / PANICKING

Screaming, waving arms, running at, and panicking when 2 dogs are negotiating or are having a low level disagreement, can quickly escalate the situation between the 2 dogs. By increasing their anxiety.



THINGS NOT TO DO WHEN BREAKING UP A DOG FIGHT

NOTE: We should learn and practice proper techniques so they become instinctual.



NEVER USE HANDS OR BODY

Never use your hands or body parts to get in between dogs fighting or try to pry open dogs jaws with your hands. Dogs jaws are powerful and meant to crush bone and tear flesh. Serious injuries can occur if you use body parts to break up a dog fight.



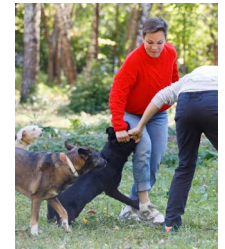
NEVER KICK, PUNCH, OR HIT

Never kick, punch or hit an animal that is attacking another animal. The aggressor could turn on you and begin to attack you. Also, this will increase arousal and aggression in the dog.



NEVER PICK UP SMALL DOGS

Never pick up and hold your small dog if it is being attacked by another dog. The dog will begin to jump and could unintentionally bite you while trying to get to the dog. If you can put your dog in a protected space, like a trash can, open car, or on top of a car



NEVER COLLAR GRAB

Never try to grab collar to move dogs away from fighting. A dog may redirect a bite to your hand. The collar may twist and break your fingers, the collar may break, or slip off the dog.

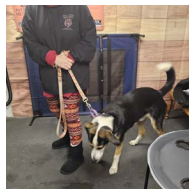
DEFENSIVE HANDLING - Top 4 of many

NOTE: There are many more defensive handling techniques, these may not work for every situation.



BE AWARE

Always be aware of your environment. Know the distance your dog is comfortable away from other dogs. Scan for oncoming people or dogs. Be prepared with treats, visual barriers or escape route.



LEASH HOLD DOG SHIFT

Brace your leash with both hands against your hips and shift your body to turn with your dog away from oncoming dogs to move them away. Use your center of gravity.



TREAT SCATTER

If you see off leash dog/s running up to you throw treats towards the oncoming dogs and away from you. Note not all dogs are treat motivated and may continue to come at you. Exit quickly using leash hold dog shift.



VISUAL BLOCKER

Use an umbrella, board, or your body to create a visual blocker from oncoming dogs. Tuck your reactive dog behind you, or behind a visual barrier like a car. Note - Dogs can move around barriers, so keep moving

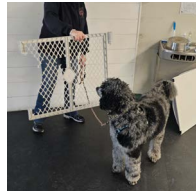
TOOLS FOR BREAKING UP A DOG FIGHT - Every dog centric place should have a dog fight kit!

NOTE: Some or none of these tools may work for every dog and/or dog fight.



1 DOOR BELL OR HAPPY CALLS

Ring your door bell, this may be enough to change the mind set of the dog, and distract them to separate them. Also, try making happy calls to see if this is enough to move them away from each other for the excitement elsewhere.



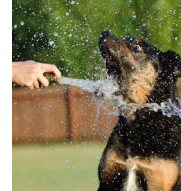
2 BARRIER

Using a physical barrier to separate them long enough to move them away from each other. As a last resort use a blanket only on the aggressor. Do not use a blanket if you have 2 dogs fighting.



3 WATER

Spray in dogs face or down throat or douse them with water from a container or from the hose.



4 NOISE MAKERS / AIR HORN

Use pet corrector or a noise maker to shake/hiss behind the aggressors head (1 foot), not in their ears. Do not use high pitched screams. Use low deep yelling tones. Note these can cause noise trauma, if over used or used incorrectly.



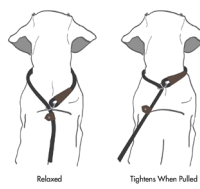
5 WHEEL BARROW - Only use if you have learned how to use safely and properly.

This technique involves picking the rear end up, by the hips, of the aggressor and swinging him out of the way. If 2 dogs are fighting you need 2 people, one for each dog. This technique should not be used with a locking bite.



6 SPRAY SHIELD / PEPPER SPRAY

Spray Shield is citronella, which is not noxious. Pepper spray is dangerous to humans, so don't use as a regular tool. Make sure you spray away from your face. Do not spray directly in the eyes of the dog. Spray the Spray shield up the dogs nose.



7 SLIP LEAD / LEASH - Only use if you have practiced timing, and proper usage of a slip lead and how to get it on a moving dog.

Only use on the aggressor in a dog fight to move them away. If your dog has a harness on and you can safely clip on the leash to the back not the neck. DO SO!



8 BREAK BAR - Only used if have been trained in its use

Do not use as a weapon. This is the only safe method of removing a locking bite, as it can break teeth. It should also be used in combination with safe slip lead use or in combination with wheel barrow. Must have more than one person available.



PROPER WAY TO BREAK UP A DOG FIGHT (Each fight is unique)

NOTE: You should be practicing with a trained professional before you use any technique or tool

ALWAYS PROTECT THE HUMAN FIRST!

BE PREPARED BY LEARNING BEFORE YOU HAVE TO EXPERIENCE A DOG FIGHT!

1 STOP & THINK YOU HAVE TIME

DEEP BREATH. Panicking will only make things worse. **CALM** yourself before you engage. Remember these 8 steps to breaking up a dog fight.

2 WATCH

Watch just for a few moments to see if it resolves itself. Most dogs will not escalate to a full dog fight. Be prepared if it escalates.

3 TYPE

Determine type of fight. Large dog on small dog Suffocating bite Neck bite/hold Scissor fight Squabble, back off, or fear reaction?

4 ASSESS

Children, elderly & other dogs safe? What is your exit strategy? Is there a safe zone? Enclosure availability? What is your control position?

5 GET HELP

Ask a 2nd person to help you calmly. Even if it to just grab tools, barriers or leashes. If there are no other people available, be extra careful with bite risks.

6 TOOLS

LOOK. What tools do you have at your finger tips? If none, go get one of the tools. (Barriers, slip lead, sound, water, spray, etc) **Try least invasive first.**

7 ACTION

Once you have done steps 1 thru 6... **BE CALM - DON'T PANIC AVOID BITE RISKS USE YOUR TOOLS USE CAUTION & INTERVENE**

8 MOVE!

Move the dog to a safe space away from the other dog. Behind gates, into a room/car. Don't let them engage again. Assess why. If unsure reach out to a qualified trainer