



Early Learning Centre Lessons



Welcome

Welcome to our newly developed Early Learning Centre Lesson Pack! We are excited to have you join us in spreading a few of our important animal welfare messages to your young learners.

Inside this pack, you'll discover our Dog Safety lesson designed for children aged 3-5. This lesson comes with a basic plan and resources, making it easy for any educator or volunteer to deliver at your Early Learning Centre independently.

Together, let's work to inspire empathy and responsibility in our young learners towards all animals. Your dedication will help us spread the message of RSPCA NSW across the state, making a meaningful difference for both animals and humans.



RSPCA NSW Education Team

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🌐 <https://www.rspcansw.org.au/ending-animal-cruelty/preventing/education-programs/>

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About RSPCA NSW

The RSPCA NSW is a **nonprofit organisation dedicated to the welfare of animals and supporting the human-animal bond**. It has provided care and shelter to animals for over 150 years.



Our Vision

To create a world where all animals are treated with care, kindness, respect, and dignity.

Our Mission

To protect and care for animals by preventing cruelty and empowering communities to value humane treatment through education, advocacy, and support.



At RSPCA NSW, we are dedicated to animal welfare through our partnerships with local councils, governments, and various community groups. Our network of shelters and veterinary hospitals provides exceptional care for animals in our custody and care. We also work closely with our volunteers and members of the public to foster a strong sense of community engagement, where we recognise that each member plays a vital role in fulfilling our mission.

The RSPCA NSW Education Team is committed to prioritising education to encourage a society that values and safeguards animals. Through engaging lessons, activities and workshops, games, and presentations, our programs aim to instil empathy, understanding, and respect for all living beings among children, educators, and communities. Our vision is to empower everyone with the knowledge and skills needed to ensure the wellbeing of all animals, great and small.

Early Learning Centre: Dog Safety Lesson Outline

Learning Outcomes

L01: Children have a strong sense of identity

- ▶ Children develop their emerging autonomy, interdependence, resilience and sense of agency

L03: Children have a strong sense of wellbeing

- ▶ Children take increasing responsibility for their own health and physical wellbeing

This lesson plan and accompanying resources on dog safety are designed to be accessible and adaptable for educators with diverse backgrounds and levels of expertise. The lesson plan offers a structured approach for a **20 minute lesson**, while allowing for adaptation based on individual teaching styles and classroom dynamics. By using this lesson plan, educators contribute to fostering responsible pet interactions and positive relationships while enhancing the wellbeing of both humans and dogs.

Aim:

By the end of the lesson, children will be able to safely interact with known and unknown dogs. Additionally, they will have a basic understanding that dogs can have a diverse array of emotions that we can identify through their body language including happy, sad and angry. Recognising emotions will work towards promoting the human animal bond and autonomy of health and physical wellbeing.

Success Criteria:

- ▶ Successfully identify different dog body language and correlating emotions.
- ▶ Identify situations where it is and is not safe to approach a dog.
- ▶ Recall steps on how to meet a dog.

Key / New words:

- ▶ Safe / Unsafe
- ▶ Body language

Resources:

All resources included in this package and are designed for either online use or for printing, to suit educator needs.

Optional Recommended Resource:

A plush dog to enhance students learning.

Prior Knowledge:

Prior discussion about what the children know about safe interactions with dogs.

Description	Time
<p>Introduction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Greet students and ask if they like animals. Ask what some of their favourite animals are. ▶ Introduce the lesson goal: To learn about how to safely meet and interact with dogs they know and don't know. ▶ Ask students if they have a dog or know someone with a dog. 	<p>2 mins</p>
<p>Development</p>	
<p>Emotions and Dog Body Language</p> <p>Discuss how humans have different feelings, and compare to how animals also have different feelings. For each of the following emotions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Use the “how is this person feeling” card and ask students how they think they are feeling. ▶ Act it out: Ask children to demonstrate what they look like when they are feeling that emotion ▶ Then use the corresponding dog emotion card and ask students how they think the dog is feeling. Point out dog body language including the ears, mouth, tail and body. Act it out: Ask children to demonstrate the dog feeling 	<p>2 mins</p>
<p>A Happy Dog</p> <p>Meeting a Dog:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Share the 3 steps to safely meet a dog for the first time using images and role-playing. ▶ Act it out: Stand in a circle and using a plush dog, allow students to practice where they should pat a dog. 	<p>5 mins</p>
<p>A Scared Dog</p> <p>Safe/Unsafe Situations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Display images of different situations with dogs and ask children if they think the dog is safe to approach and pat. ▶ Talk about why it may not be safe to pat for each image. 	<p>5 mins</p>
<p>An Angry Dog</p> <p>Encountering an Unknown Angry Dog:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Talk about how to respond when an unknown angry dog comes up to you. Demonstrate being SAFE. ▶ Act it out: Practice becoming a boring statue while the educator walks around with an ‘angry’ plush dog. 	<p>5 mins</p>
<p>Conclusion</p> <p>Quick review of what a happy dog looks like, where to pat a dog and what a statue looks like.</p>	<p>1 mins</p>

Emotions and Dog Body Language

2 Mins

Discuss how humans have different feelings, and compare to how animals also have different feelings.

For each of the following sections of Happy Dog, Scared Dog and Angry Dog follow the sequence below to explore dog feelings and body language.



Use the “How is this person feeling” card to ask students how they think the person is feeling.

1



Act it out: Ask children to demonstrate what they look like when they are feeling this emotion.

2



Use the corresponding dog emotion card and ask how they think the dog is feeling.

3



Point out dog body language that shows this feeling, including the ears, mouth, tail and body.

4



Act it out: Ask children to demonstrate the dog feeling.

5



Repeat for the other feelings.

6

A Happy Dog

5 Mins

How are these people feeling?



Use the "How is this person feeling" card to ask students how they think the person is feeling.

1



Act it out: Ask children to demonstrate what they look like when they are feeling this emotion.

2



Use the Happy dog emotion card and ask how they think the dog is feeling.

3



Point out dog body language that shows this feeling, including the ears, mouth, tail and body.

4



Act it out: Ask children to demonstrate the dog feeling.

5



Repeat for the other feelings.

6

How is this dog feeling?



Happy Dog Body Language:

- ▶ **Mouth:** Open showing bottom teeth and with the tongue hanging out. This is how a dog smiles.
- ▶ **Tail:** Relaxed tail and may be wagging.

Additional talking points:

- ▶ **Ears:** Relaxed and floppy depending on dog breed.
- ▶ **Body:** Relaxed.

A happy dog is the only safe dog to pat. They will show you they are happy to meet you with their bodies. It is like them saying "Hi, I want to be friends".

Now that children can identify a happy dog that is safe to pat, transition to how to safely approach and meet a dog.

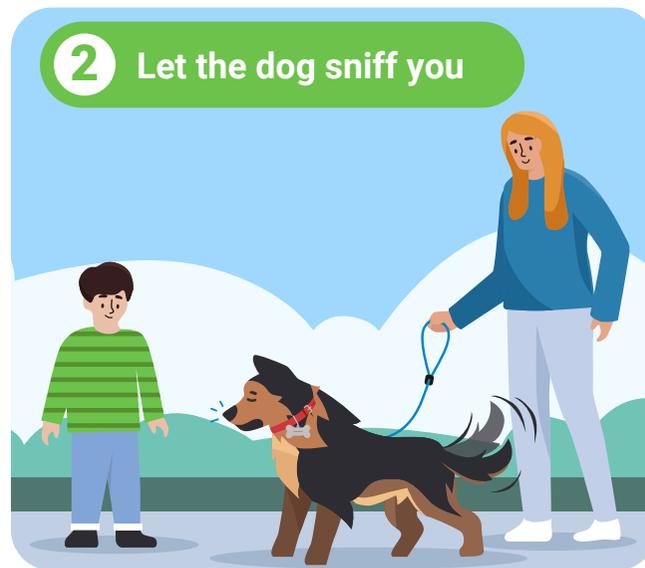
Meeting a Dog

Share the 3 steps to safely meet a dog for the first time using images and role-playing.

Act it out: Stand in a circle and using plush dog, allow students to practice where they should pat a dog.



- ▶ From a safe distance, ask owner "Can I please pat your dog?"
- ▶ If owner says yes, proceed with step 2.
- ▶ If owner says no, then politely walk away.



- ▶ Let the dog come to you and the dog sniff you. This is how dogs say hello.
- ▶ Keep your hands by your side. Dogs have a great sense of smell and sticking your hand out suddenly could scare the dog.



- ▶ By crouching down to the dogs level you are making yourself look less scary.
- ▶ Patting on the chest where dogs can see your hands. Avoid patting the face, head, tail or back.

A Scared Dog

5 Mins

How is this person feeling?



Use the "How is this person feeling" card to ask students how they think the person is feeling.

1



Act it out: Ask children to demonstrate what they look like when they are feeling this emotion.

2



Use the Scared dog emotion card and ask how they think the dog is feeling.

3



Point out dog body language that shows this feeling, including the ears, mouth, tail and body.

4



Act it out: Ask children to demonstrate the dog feeling.

5



Repeat for the other feelings.

6

How is this dog feeling?



Scared Dog Body Language:

- ▶ **Head:** Head will be low to the ground and face may be scrunched and showing wrinkles.
- ▶ **Tail:** Tail tucked between legs and under the body.
- ▶ **Body:** Crouched to the ground and may be shaking. Dog might also back away.

Additional talking points:

- ▶ **Whimpering:** Scared dog may make a whimpering noise. Just how we want to be treated kindly, so do dogs. A scared dog can easily become an angry dog if they are not left alone when they are scared. By understanding their feelings and giving them space when they are scared, we can keep ourselves safe.

Transition into different unsafe dog situations where children need to be careful not to try and pat.

Unsafe Situations

Display images of different situations with dogs and ask children if they think the dog is safe to approach and pat.

Talk about why it may not be safe to pat for each image

A dog behind a fence



WHY?

If you reach through the fence to pat this dog, they can become territorial or angry.

A dog with her puppies



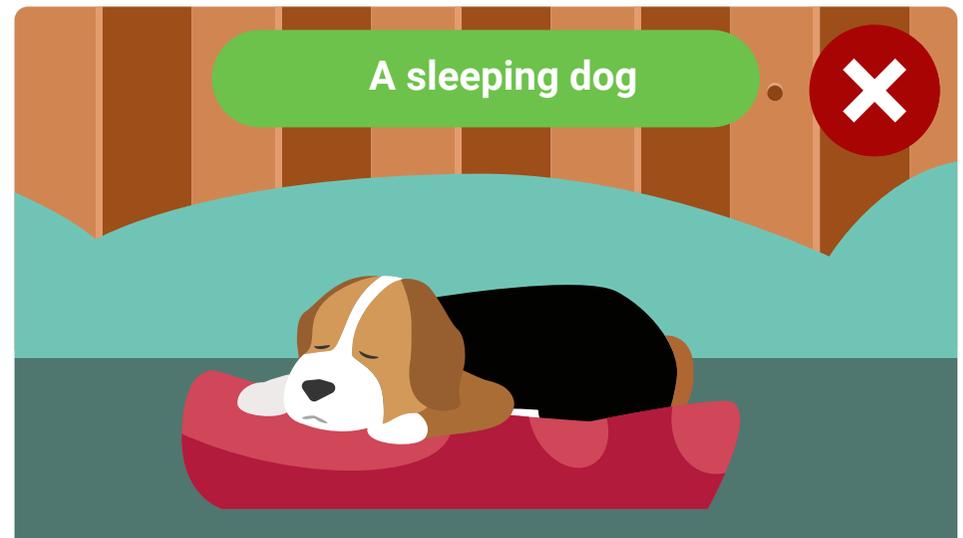
WHY?

A mother is protective of her pups, so she can become angry if you choose to pat her and her puppies.



A service dog

WHY? A working dog or a service dog are focused on their job, so we should not distract them.



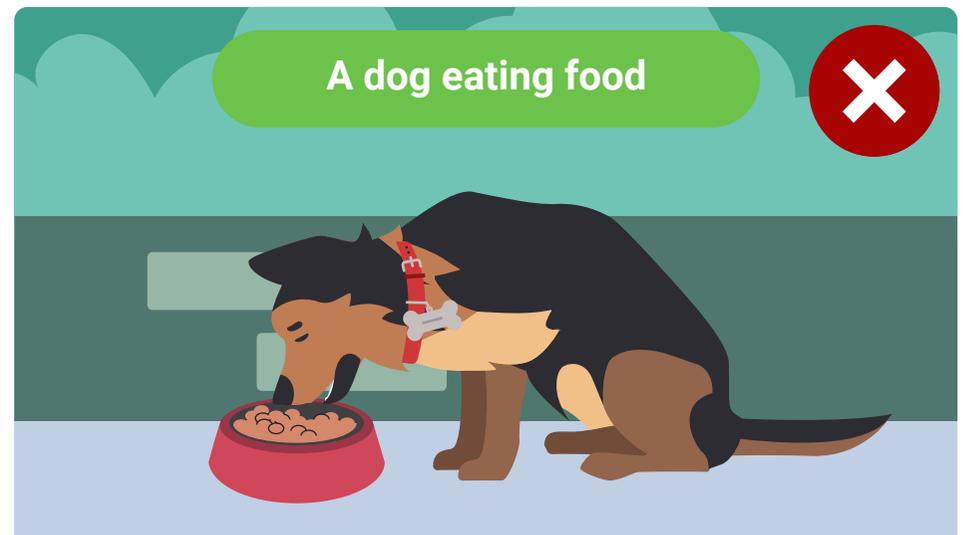
A sleeping dog

WHY? A sleeping dog can be scared if it is woken up and can bite you from the shock.



A dog tied up with no owner

WHY? A dog without its owner and that is tied up can become angry or scared as they have no way to escape if you try to pat them.



A dog eating food

WHY? A dog that is eating can think you are taking it's food and can become angry or try and guard their meal.

An Angry Dog

5 Mins

How is this person feeling?



Use the "How is this person feeling" card to ask students how they think the person is feeling.

1



Act it out: Ask children to demonstrate what they look like when they are feeling this emotion.

2



Use the Angry dog emotion card and ask how they think the dog is feeling.

3



Point out dog body language that shows this feeling, including the ears, mouth, tail and body.

4



Act it out: Ask children to demonstrate the dog feeling.

5



Repeat for the other feelings.

6

How is this dog feeling?



Angry Dog Body Language:

- ▶ **Mouth:** Showing top and bottom teeth. Very likely to be barking and growling.
- ▶ **Tail:** Tail will be held straight up high and stiff.
- ▶ **Ears:** Ears will also be held stiff and tense, depending on dog breed.
- ▶ **Body:** Dog may be lunging forwards and the hair on the body will be sticking up. Everything about the dog is trying to look bigger and more scary.

This dog doesn't want to hurt us intentionally, but is scared and trying to protect itself. We can be safe by knowing what to do when we meet an unknown angry dog.

Transition to staying SAFE when encountering an unknown angry dog.

Encountering an Unknown Angry Dog

Talk about how to respond when an unknown angry dog comes up to you. Demonstrate being **SAFE**.

Act it out: Practice becoming a boring statue while the educator walks around with an 'angry' plush dog.

S Stand still

A Arms folded

F Forget eye contact

E Easy does it

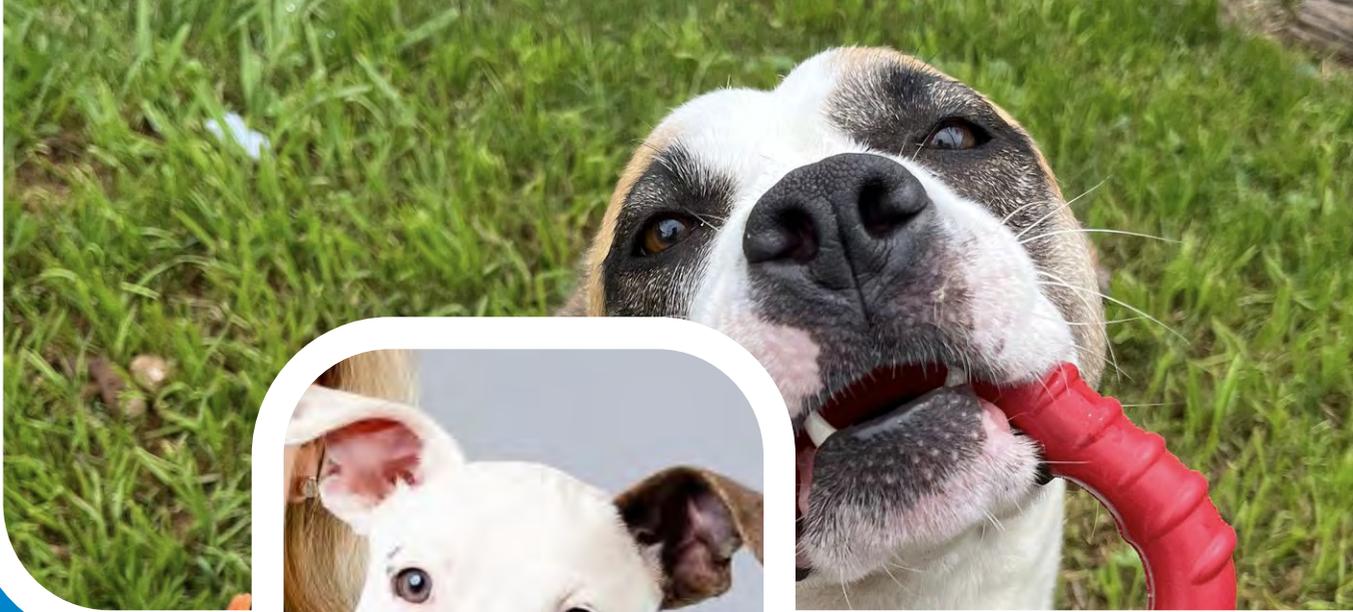


Teach children how to stay safe when encountering an unfamiliar dog without an owner by adopting the behaviour of a 'boring statue'. This technique, represented by the acronym **SAFE**, includes:

- ▶ **Stand still:** Avoid any sudden movements and stand completely still.
- ▶ **Arms folded:** Keep arms crossed in front of you, away from the dog.
- ▶ **Forget eye contact:** Avoid making direct eye contact with the dog.
- ▶ **Easy does it:** Remain calm and quiet.

By mimicking a 'boring statue,' children appear uninteresting and non-threatening to the dog, allowing it to pass by without disturbance. If children are on the floor and met with an unknown dog. They can roll up into a ball and grab their head with their arms.

Dog Safety: Resources



How are these kids feeling?



How is this dog feeling?

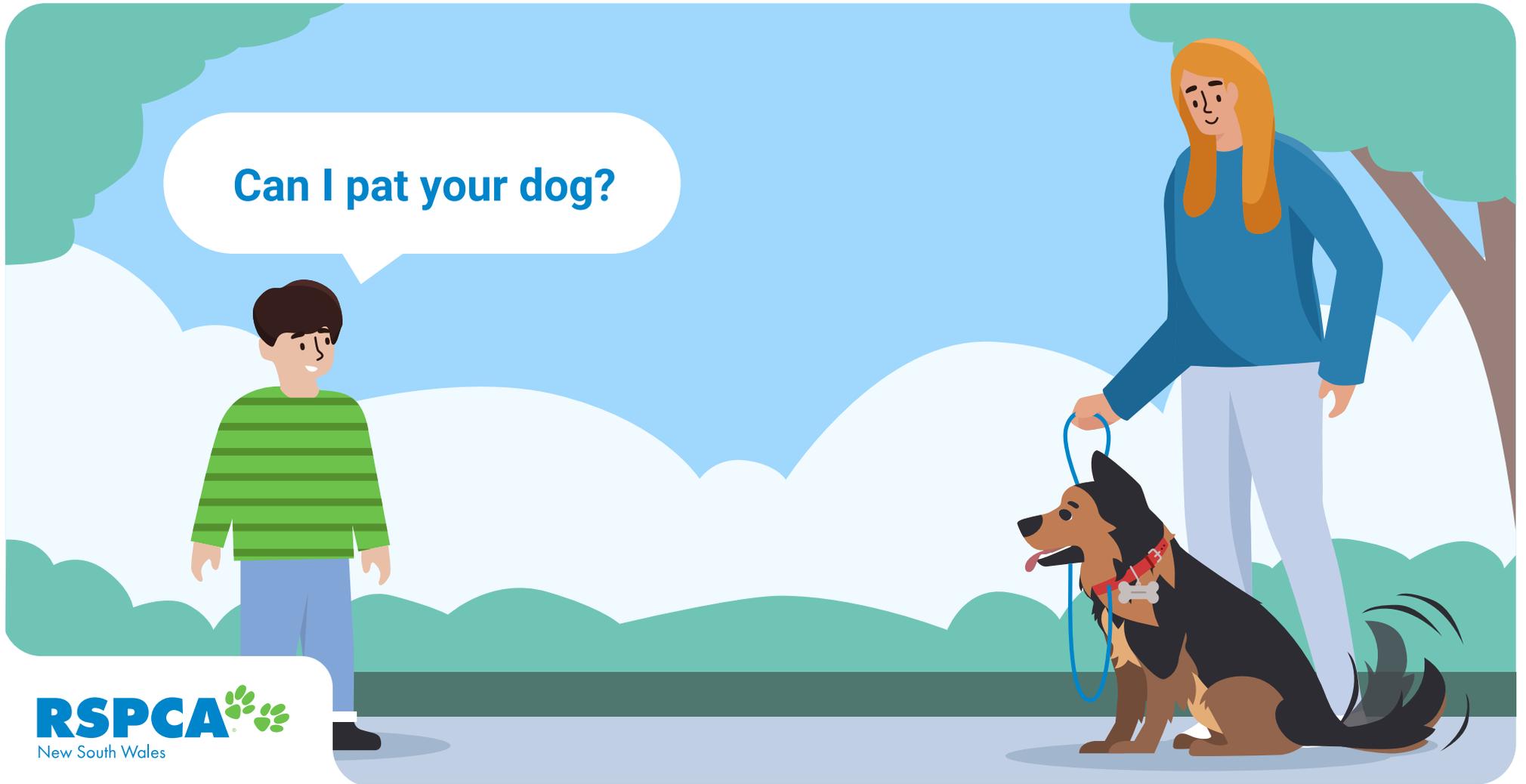


Meeting a Dog with an Owner

1

Ask the owner

Can I pat your dog?



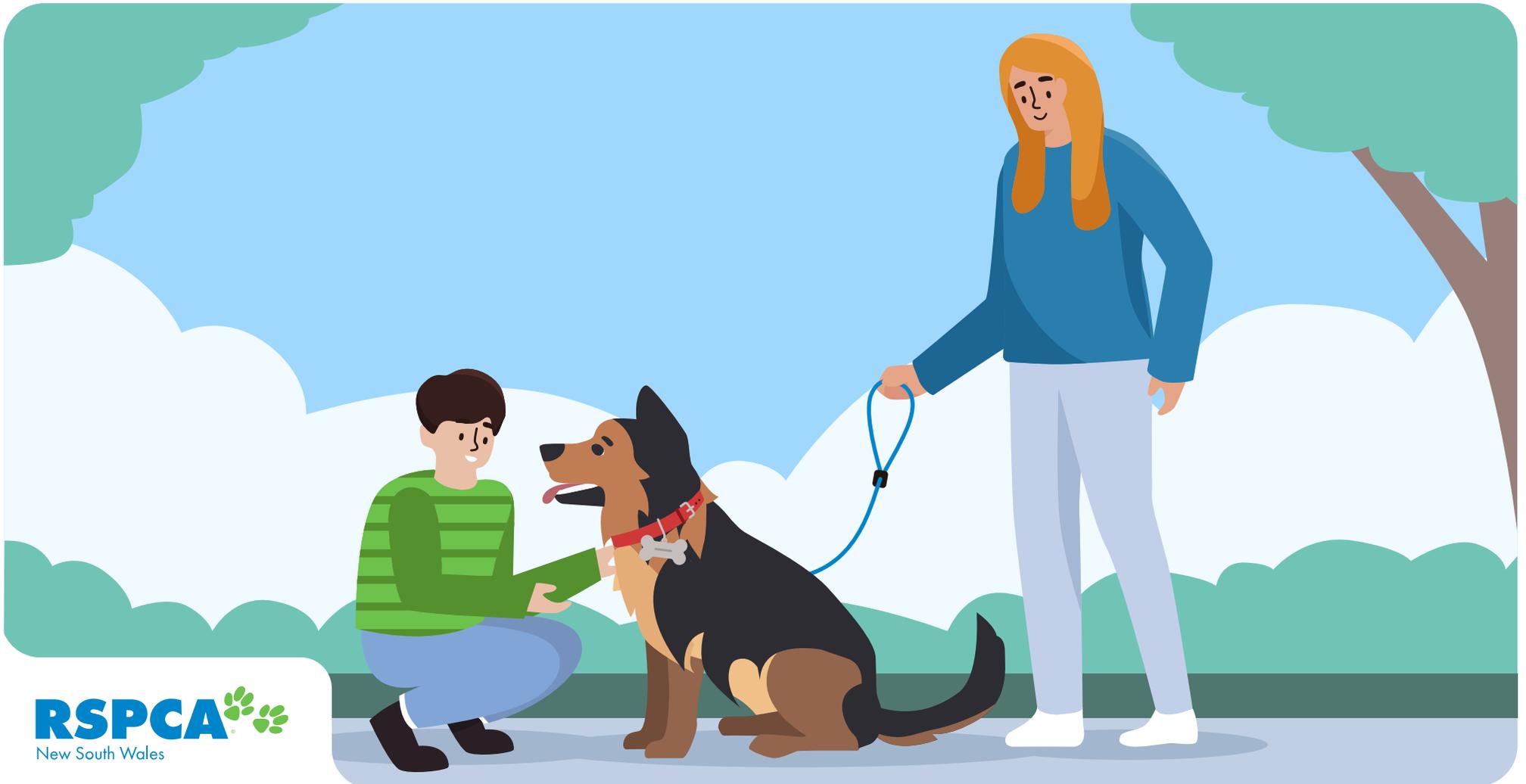
Meeting a Dog with an Owner

2 Let the dog sniff you



Meeting a Dog with an Owner

3 Pat the dog on the chest



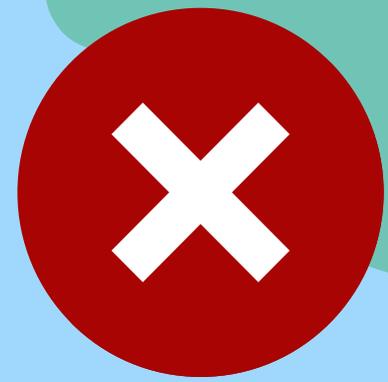
How is this girl feeling?



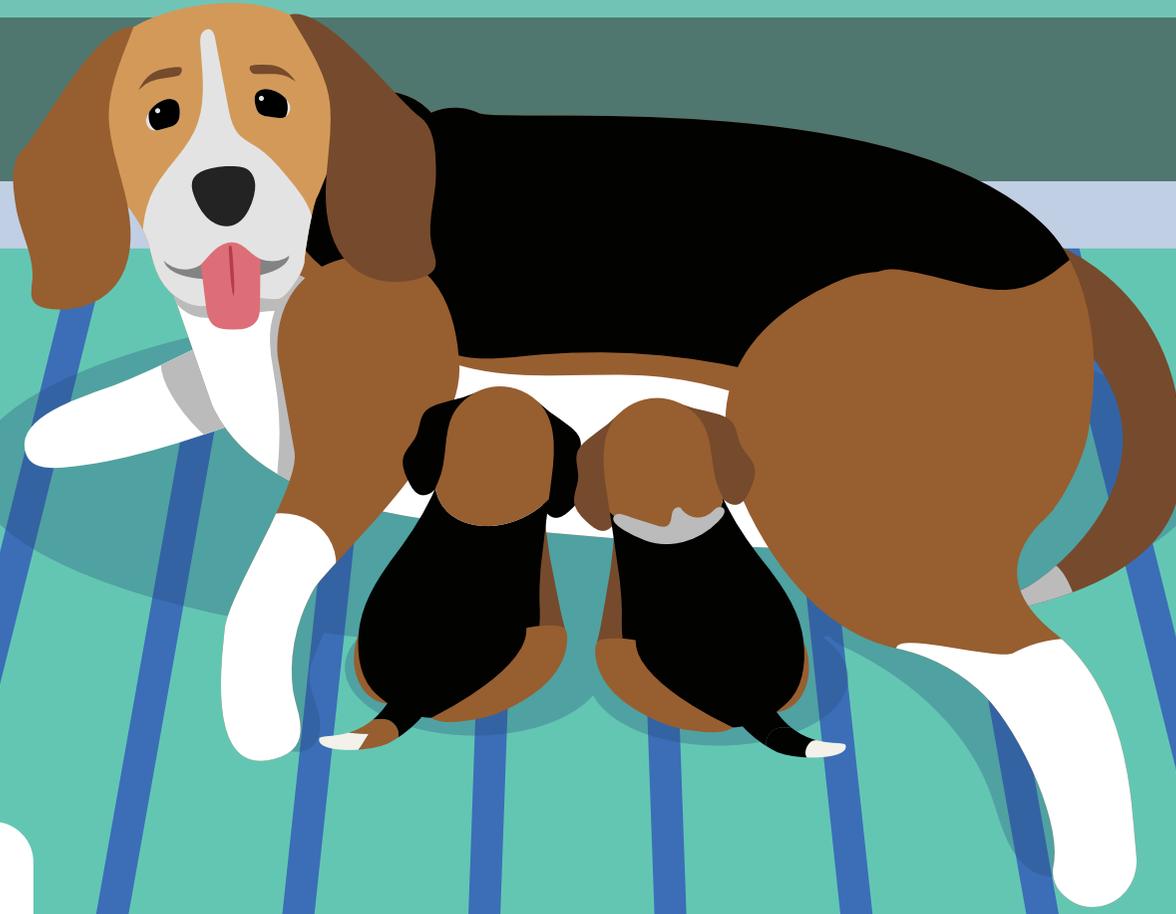
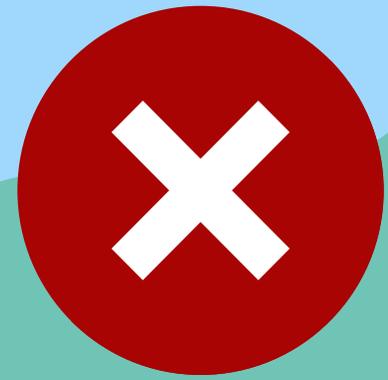
How is this dog feeling?



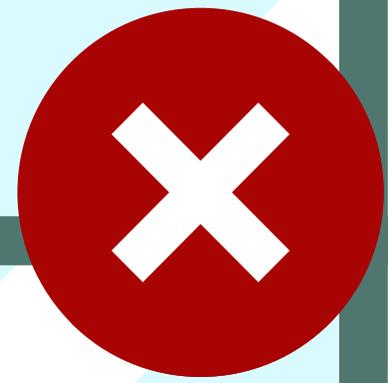
A dog behind a fence



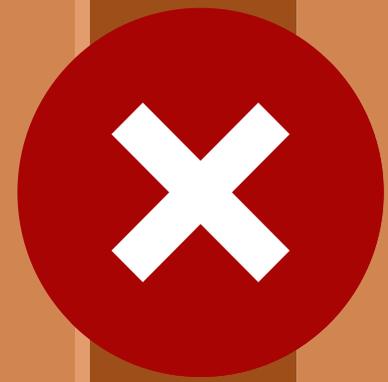
A dog with her puppies



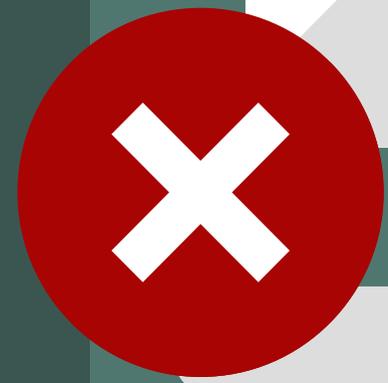
A service dog



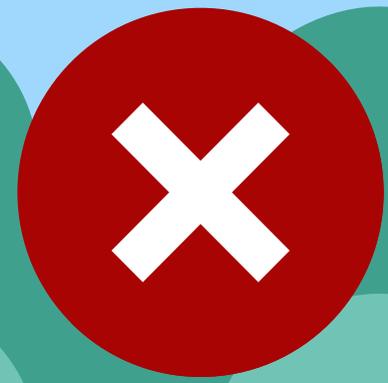
A sleeping dog



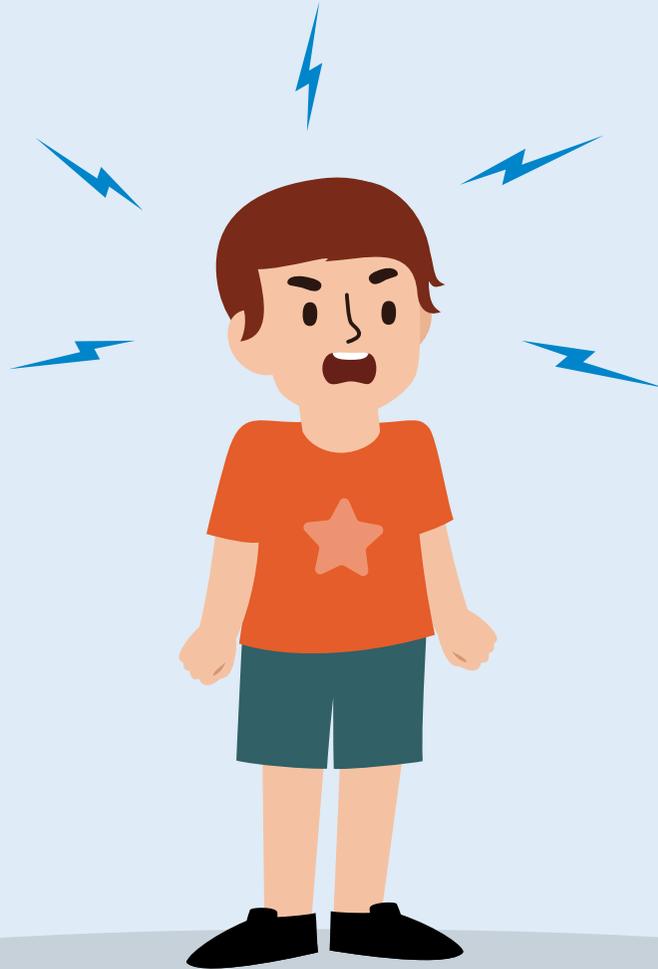
A dog tied up with no owner



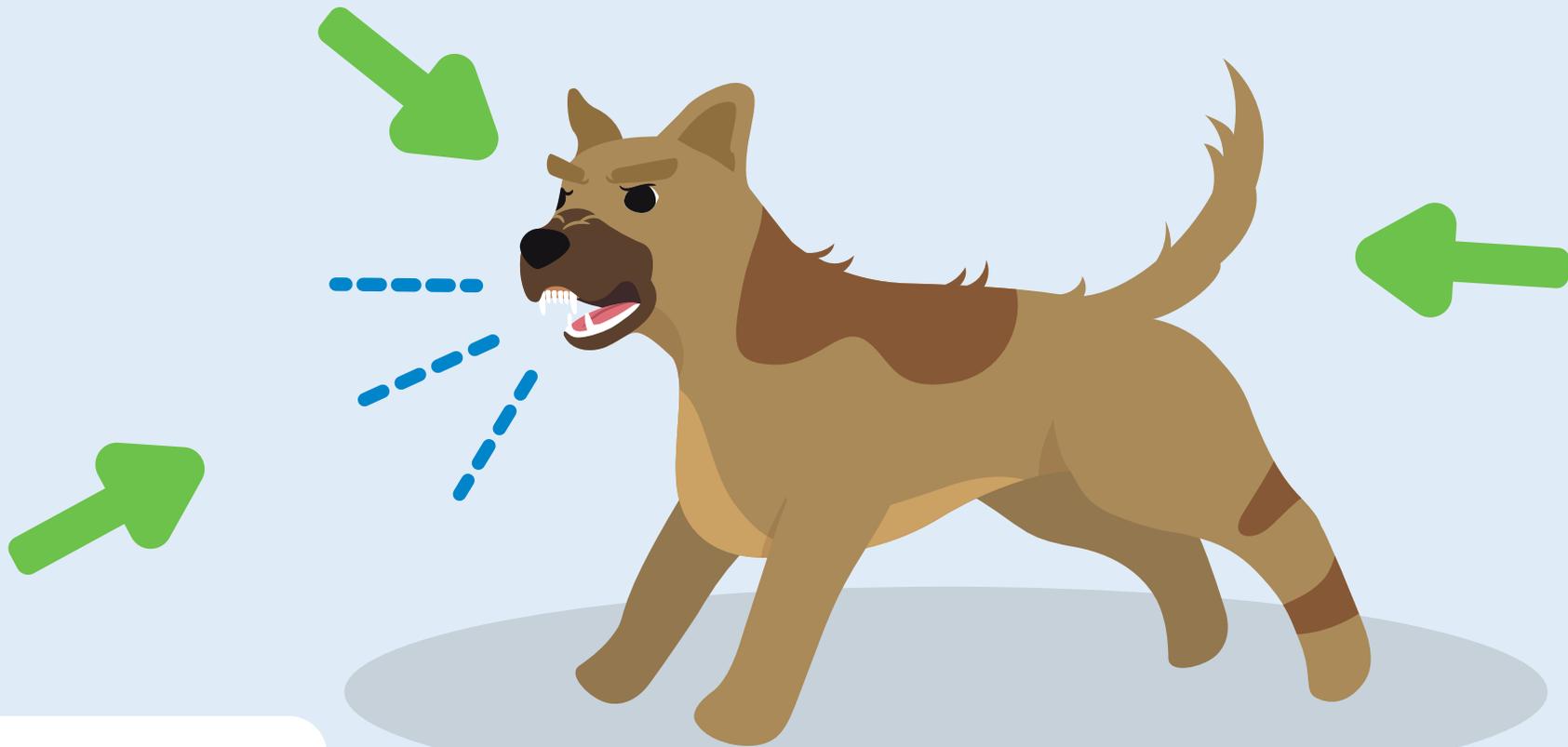
A dog eating food



How is this person feeling?



How is this dog feeling?



Stand still

Arms folded

Forget eye contact

Easy does it



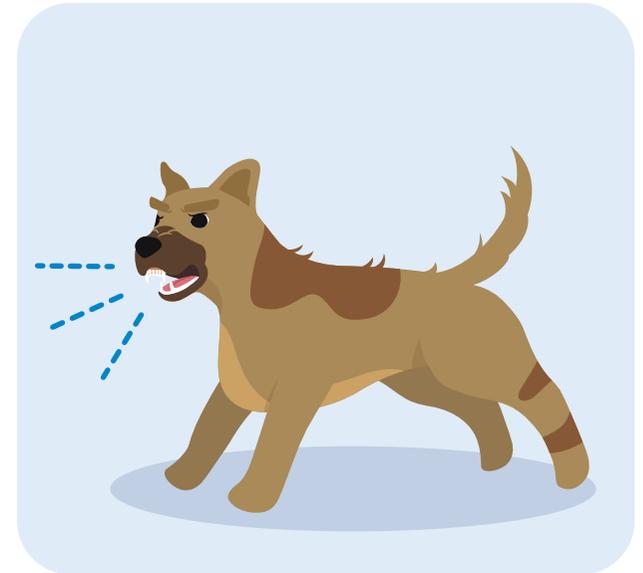
Dog Body



Happy



Scared



Angry