



Dog Bite Prevention

Every year, according to the U.S. Center for Disease Control, approximately 4.7 million people are bitten by a dog. About 800,000 of those bitten seek medical attention. Further, about one-half of all dog bite victims are children under twelve, and children between the ages of five and nine are at the greatest risk of a dog bite injury. Injuries can range from minor to life-threatening bites.

Eight hundred thousand bites serious enough to require medical intervention sounds like an awful lot of injuries, but to put it into perspective children are twelve times more likely to be injured by a car, seven times more likely to be injured by a sharp object and 1.5 times more likely to be injured by a bicycle. When you consider that during 2007-2008, there were approximately 75 million dogs kept as pets in the United States, 400,000 bites to children seems a remarkably low amount of bite injuries.

Why do dogs bite? Surprisingly, most bites occur in the home, by a dog known to the child. Homes with multiple dogs report more bites than single dog homes. But most importantly, many bites are avoidable, through lessons reinforced both in school and in the home. Learning to read a dog's body language is a first step to preventing injuries.

Teaching students the right and wrong way to communicate with dogs benefits everyone. According to the ASPCA, approximately 3 million to 4 million animals are euthanized in our nation's shelters. The reasons run the gamut, from strays being brought to shelters by animal control officers and owner surrenders, to

pets' illnesses. Biting is the ninth most common reason dogs are relinquished to animal shelters (Swan 2006), and most of those brought in for biting will be euthanized. If dog bite prevention is taught early and often and families take the time to socialize dogs, many of these dogs may not bite, and could be in loving homes today.

"A dog may bite because of fear, illness or pain, protectiveness, control, high prey drive or just because he's tired of being bothered and no one is heeding his warning that enough is enough."

Dogs are important members of families. Some are important members of the workforce—holding jobs and performing tasks that many humans are unable to perform. They can do many amazing things! However, one thing they cannot do is speak to us in our language. They cannot communicate with words that they are scared, upset, or not feeling well. But they can communicate these with their body language and we can "hear" them once we understand what we are seeing.

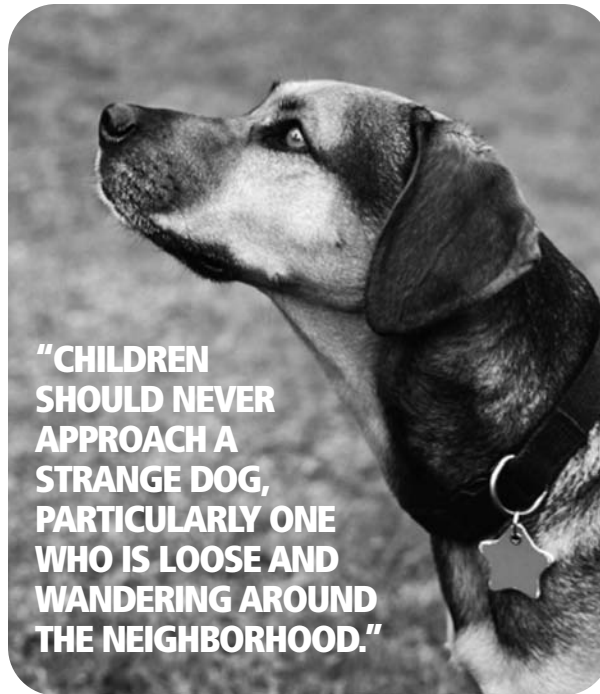
A dog may bite because of fear, illness or pain, protectiveness, control, high prey drive or just because he's tired of being bothered and no one is heeding his warning that enough is enough. Dogs use their own unique signals and clues to warn us that they may bite. Helping children understand the reasons dogs may become aggressive, teaching them how to read the signals dogs give us and giving them the skills to handle potentially dangerous situations with dogs, benefits not only children's health and



safety, but the dogs' as well. Less bites translates to less dogs relinquished to shelters, less dogs dying needless deaths in shelters, and stronger bonds between people and animals.

There are several signals a dog may display to indicate that he will bite. For example, a dog may be about to bite if he's leaning forward with his weight over his front legs and he has a stiff tail, which may actually be wagging, but stiffly and quickly rather than loosely and happily. His fur may be standing up on his neck, he may be moving with a stiff-legged, slow gait and he may be growling. These are all warning signals dogs may exhibit prior to a bite, and children should be familiar with these postures and behaviors. If a dog is startled unexpectedly—from a hug or a kiss on the face—a dog may bite without warning.

Approaching or bothering a dog who is eating, chewing a toy, caring for puppies or sleeping may precipitate a bite. Other situations in which a bite is likely include approaching a barking, growling or clearly frightened



"CHILDREN SHOULD NEVER APPROACH A STRANGE DOG, PARTICULARLY ONE WHO IS LOOSE AND WANDERING AROUND THE NEIGHBORHOOD."

dog; trying to pet dogs who are tethered, behind a fence, or in someone's car, and screaming and running from a dog. Children should never approach a strange dog, particularly one who is loose and wandering around the neighborhood. They should be instructed to always ask an adult for advice and let the adult make the decision about how to approach or investigate the situation. Even a dog who is leashed and being walked should not be approached without first asking for and obtaining his guardian's permission.

While most children are bitten by dogs they know, sometimes lost or stray dogs may approach a child and may bite. It's important to teach children not to run and scream, but rather to stand still and straight "like a tree," remaining silent and staring at their feet. Often a dog will realize the child does not present a threat and after a few sniffs, they may leave. This obviously does not guarantee the dog will not attack, but it does significantly increase the chances of the child walking away unharmed.

In this newsletter are some great activities for you and your students that will reinforce safe behaviors around dogs. Dogs truly can be our greatest helpers—they will indicate where a victim may be in earthquake rubble, they will patiently and expertly guide blind partners, they are calm, gentle visitors to hospital and nursing home residents, they can sniff out bombs and narcotics and protect their police partners. They can also be our best friends—waiting for the car or school bus to pull up, motivating us to exercise and licking a smile onto our faces. By learning how dogs communicate, and how to interact safely around them, children will experience deeper long-lasting relationships with them. And maybe—just maybe—fewer dogs will find themselves at an animal shelter, awaiting their fate, because they tried to tell us something, but we didn't understand.

Swan, A. "Animal Shelter Statistics: Why it is so Important to Consider Adopting Your Next Pet from a Shelter." *Associated Content* (April 27, 2006). http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/29485/animal_shelter_statistics.html





Teacher Instructions

Activity 1: Grades K-2

Young children are often at risk for bites from pet dogs. It is important to teach them how to approach and behave around dogs. While it is never a guarantee against being bitten, there are certain steps that children (and adults) can take to decrease the likelihood that it will happen. This activity can be done by students individually or as a class. Once the questions are answered, the class can act out a scenario in which each student pretends to meet a new pet.

Here are some general answers to the questions in this activity:

- May I pet your dog? Wait until the person says that it is OK.
- When humans greet each other, they say hello and sometimes shake hands. When dogs meet someone new, they sniff each other. Their strong sense of smell helps them gather information about the other dog or human.
- Put your hand out slowly so the dog can smell you.
- Ask the person where the dog likes and doesn't like to be petted. Usually under the chin is a safe place to start.
- You should always be gentle.
- Any animal has the potential to bite, from a hamster to a dog. It is important that you get introduced to a new pet before you touch him or her. Also, no one should ever pet a wild animal.
- Animals can bite for many reasons. Some of the most common reasons are: they are frightened or scared, they are injured or someone is hurting them, they are being teased or touched in a place that they don't like, they are protecting something that is theirs, like a toy, food, their babies, or territory, etc.



When is it not safe to pet an animal?

- When the animal is unknown to you or is walking alone on the street
- When the animal is sleeping
- When the animal is eating
- When the animal is tied up on a leash or tethered in a backyard
- When an animal is in a car
- If an animal shies away from you when you try to pet him, EVEN if their guardian had told you it was okay.
- When an animal appears hurt or injured

STANDARDS:

NAS Science #3:
Life Science

NCTE English Language Arts #4:
Communication Skills

NCTE English Language Arts #5:
Communication Strategies

NCTE English Language Arts #6:
Applying Knowledge

NCTE English Language Arts #12:
Applying Language Skills



Activity 2: Grades 3-5

Using the information in this issue of *Animalessons* and other sources cited below, give your class a lesson on dog bite prevention. You may also choose to contact your local humane organization to invite a humane educator to come to your class to give the lesson. Visit www.aspc.org/findashelter to locate a shelter near your school.

After providing information for your students, you may choose to ask them to do some further research about dog bites and dog bite prevention at the library or on the Internet.

Once they have this information, they will write a play to convey this information to others. The play should have three acts and include information about how to interact with dogs they know, dogs they don't know but who are accompanied by a guardian, and dogs they don't know who are alone. You may choose to break students up into three groups so that each group writes one act of the play.

Here are some suggestions for points to cover in each act:

- Dogs they know: Do not try to interact with dogs when they are sleeping or eating; do not tease a dog with toys or food; don't play tug-of-war games.
- Dogs they do not know accompanied by a guardian: ALWAYS ask the person if you can pet their dog; ask the dog by putting out your hand in a loose fist, fingers down, for the dog to approach and sniff. Do not pet a dog who shies away from your hand or moves away from you as you approach.
- Dogs they do not know who are alone: Do not try to interact with dogs who are roaming alone, or confined in yards behind fences or on a tether. If a loose dog approaches, stand like a tree; do not look a dog directly in the eyes, but instead look down at your feet. Do not run; and do not scream. If you're riding your bike, get off and put the bike between the dog and you.
- Help your students share their knowledge by helping to arrange to perform the play for other students in the school or for a broader audience of parents and other community members.



www.aspc.org/pet-care/dog-care/dog-care-dog-bite-prevention.html

www.doggonessafe.com/

www.cdc.gov/HomeandRecreationalSafety/Dog-Bites/biteprevention.html

www.avma.org/animal_health/brochures/dog_bite/dog_bite_brochure.asp

STANDARDS:

CNAEA Theatre 5-8 #1:

Script Writing by the Creation of Improvisations and Scripted Scenes based on Personal Experience and Heritage, Imagination, Literature, and History

CNAEA Theatre 5-8 #2:

Acting by Assuming Roles and Interacting in Improvisations

CNAEA Theatre 5-4 #3:

Designing by Visualizing and Arranging Environments for Classroom

CNAEA Theatre 5-8 #3:

Designing by Developing Environments for Improvised and Scripted Scenes and Dramatizations

This lesson was adapted from Group Playwriting Project (<http://www.childdrama.com/lpplay.html>).

CNAEA Theatre 5-8 #4:

Directing by Organizing Rehearsals for Improvised and Scripted Scenes

CNAEA Theatre 5-8 #5:

Researching by Using Cultural and Historical Information to Support Improvised and Scripted Scenes

NCTE English Language Arts #7:

Evaluating Data

NCTE English Language Arts #12:

Applying Language Skills



Activity 3: Grades 6-8

In this activity, students convey the importance of dog bite prevention for other students by creating a video Public Service Announcement (PSA). Students will learn how to create and edit videos as well as practice their presentation and communication skills.



Using the information in the article, discuss with your students the importance of reading canine body language to determine whether a dog is aggressive, playful, scared, etc. Also, discuss what someone should do if they are approached by a dog who they do not know.

Based on this information, in groups of four or five, your students will create a short video that they will present to the class.

Define Public Service Announcement (PSA) for your students and show them one or both of the PSA's created by the ASPCA. Discuss with your students the important elements and messages included in each PSA.

Next, divide your students into groups and explain to them the goal of the project, what equipment they will need and where they should upload their video. In their groups, students will create a storyboard for their PSA, assign tasks, record the PSA with a video camera, edit the video and upload the video.

Create an account at TeacherTube.com or a site of your choice where students can upload their videos in a safe student-and teacher-friendly environment.

In their groups, your students can present and discuss their PSA to the class.

*If your school is not rich in video technology, you might have your students write and tape record a 30 or 60 second podcast PSA.

PSA's created by the ASPCA

www.youtube.com/watch?v=jkmfRgqJ4&feature=player_embedded

www.youtube.com/watch?v=d1GbMgZkLf&feature=channel_page

Free Video Editing Program

Window Movie Maker

www.microsoft.com/windowsxp/using/moviemaker/default.msp

Apple QuickTime

www.apple.com/quicktime/

Uploading a Video

www.teachertube.com

STANDARDS:

NCTE English Language Arts #4: Communication Skills

NCTE English Language Arts #8: Developing research tools

NETS Technology #4: Technology Communication Tools

NETS Technology #5: Technology Research Tools

Media Literacy #1: Use media to practice general observation, critical thinking, analysis, perspective-taking, and production skills.

Media Literacy #2: Use media to stimulate interest in a new topic.

Activity 4: Grades 1-3



This worksheet will help you educate your students to be able to read the facial body language of canines and to be able to distinguish whether a dog is safe or not to pet. Prior to using this worksheet, there are a few things you should discuss with your students:

Preface this activity by explaining to students that under no circumstances should they approach or pet a dog they don't know, unless they have asked the dog's guardian and have been given permission. For the purpose of this exercise, we will assume that the guardians of all of these dogs have given permission to pet the dog. What this aims to teach is that even if a guardian says its okay—you still must read the dogs own body language for a definitive answer on whether he or she wants to be touched.

Dogs use their whole bodies to communicate. The images on the worksheet only include the dogs face—which can tell us a LOT, but does not tell the whole story. Discuss with your students that if a dogs face seems welcoming and happy, but the rest of their

body does not, they will need to use caution when approaching a dog or do not approach at all.

In the second part of the activity, your students will try to translate the dogs facial body language into human language. You may need to assist depending on the age level of your class. Younger students can use simple language such as "I'm happy," or "I'm scared." Older students may want to elaborate on what the animal is trying to say to us.

STANDARDS:

NCTE English Language Arts #4: Communication Skills

NCTE English Language Arts #6: Applying Knowledge

Activity Sheet 1

I Want To Be Your Friend

There is a man walking his dog. You want to pet this dog. Imagine that you are meeting this dog for the first time.



What do I do first? _____

How do I say hi to this dog? _____

Where should I pet the dog? _____

How should I pet the dog? _____

Which animals can bite? _____

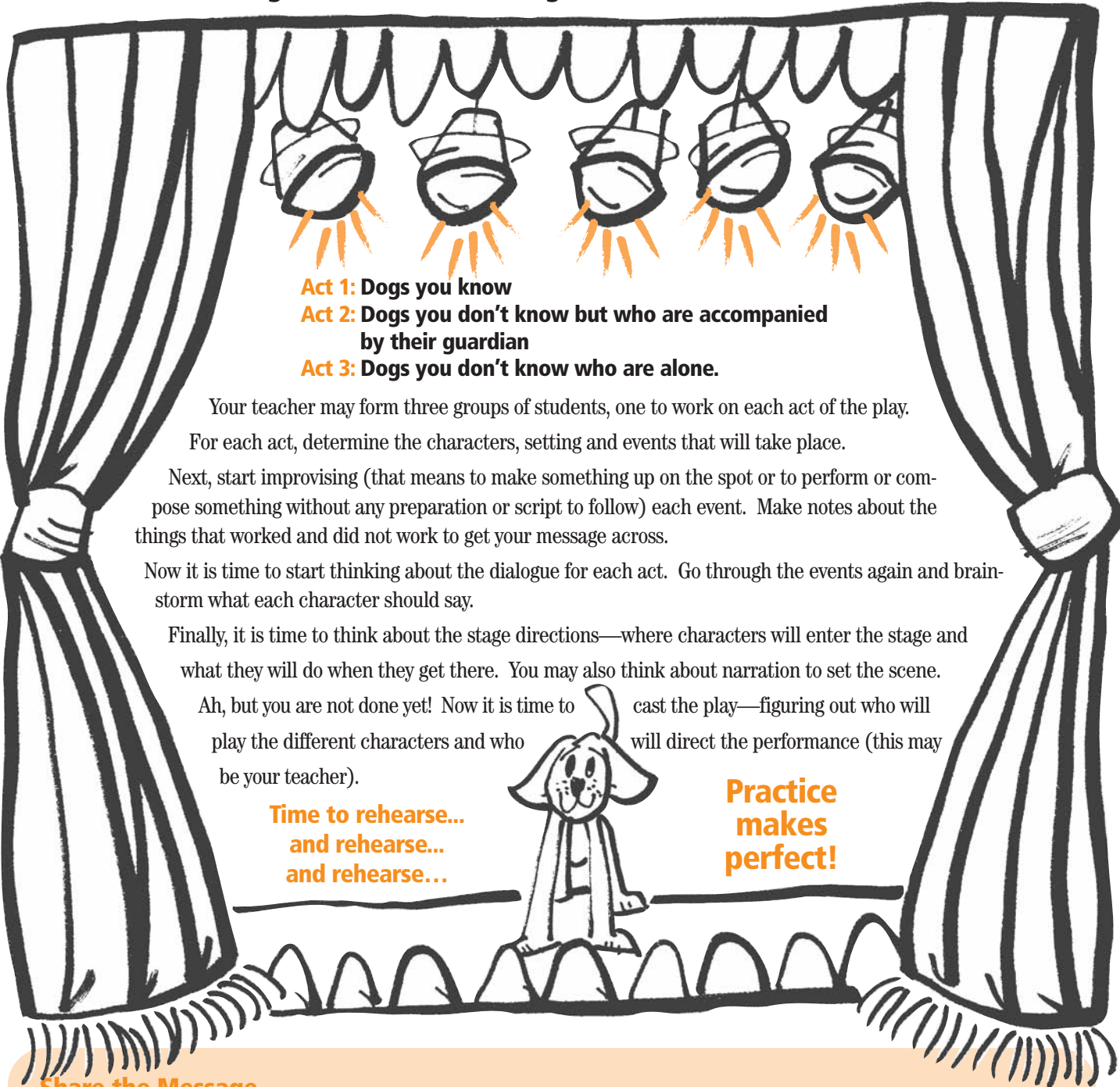
Why do animals bite? _____

When is it not safe for me to pet a dog? Write your answer and draw a picture of it.



All the World's a Stage

Using information on dog bite prevention from your teacher and your research, create a play in three acts demonstrating how to interact with dogs.



Share the Message

It would be a shame to put all that work into writing the play and not perform it in front of an audience! See if you can arrange to perform at an assembly for other students at your school, or better yet, put on a play that members of your community can come to see. You can donate the profits to an organization that works to prevent dog bites, like Doggone Safe, or one that takes care of animals in your community.

Activity Sheet 3



Lights, Camera, Action!

A Public Service Announcement (PSA) is a recording on the radio or television with the intention to change the public's knowledge or attitudes about a specific issue. As a group you will create a PSA on the importance of dog bite prevention for your community.



Project Planning

The PSA should include one of the following two main points:

- How to read canine body language whether a dog is aggressive, playful, scared, etc—your teacher will go over this with you. Review the Canine Body Language article at: <http://www.aspcabehavior.org/articles/50/Canine-Body-Language.aspx>
- What to do if you are approached by a dog you do not know.

Develop your script and assign a task to each member of the group. Decide as a group who will use the video recorder or digital camera, who will edit the video and who will perform any other tasks needed to complete the assignment.

Create Your Video

Once you have recorded your PSA, it might need some editing. You may want to add titles and other types of effects.

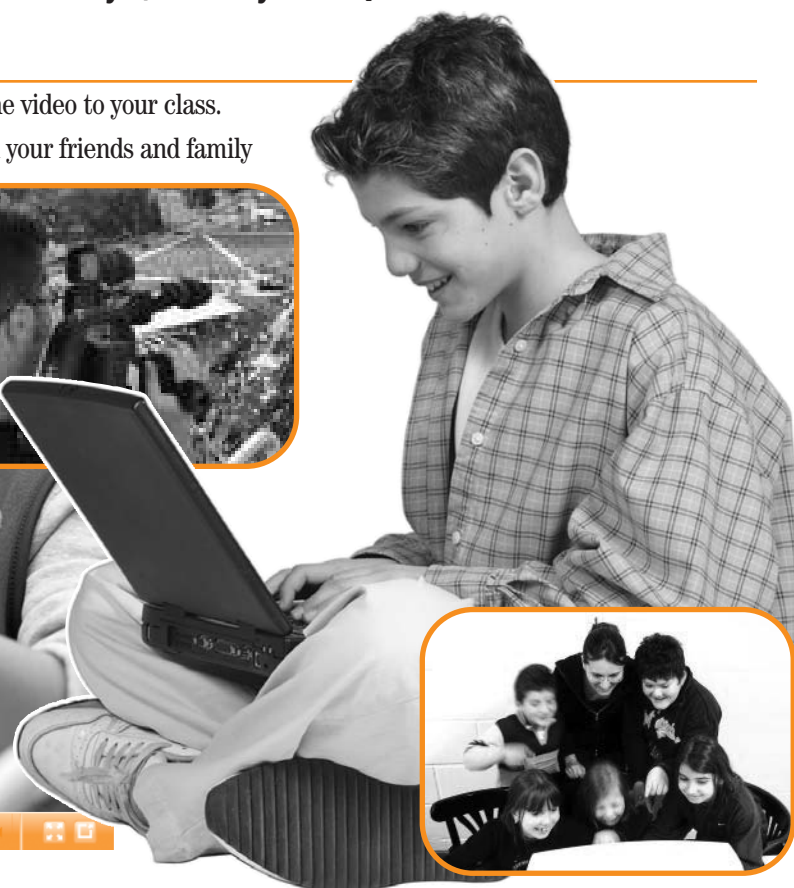
Microsoft Movie Maker for Windows users and **Apple iMovie** for MAC users are video editing software programs that are easy to use, and available as free downloads.

You can view your video using video formats such Windows **Media Player**, **Real Player** and **Quick Time**.

Video Sharing!

You will upload your video to **TeacherTube.com** and present the video to your class.

Are you a member of a social network? Share your message with your friends and family and post your PSA.





Should I Pet this Dog?

Reading a dog's body language can be confusing, but they do give us signs of how they are feeling, and it's our job to learn to understand them. For the activity below, look at each picture and first decide "Should I pet this dog?" Circle YES or NO below the picture. Next, in the word bubble above the dog, write what you think the dog would be saying if he could speak in a human language.



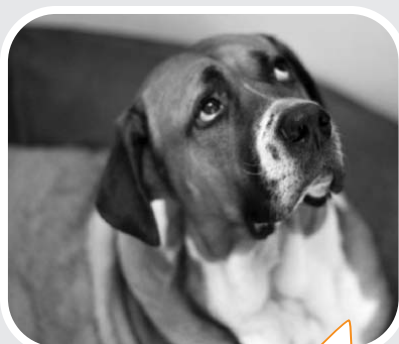
YES or NO



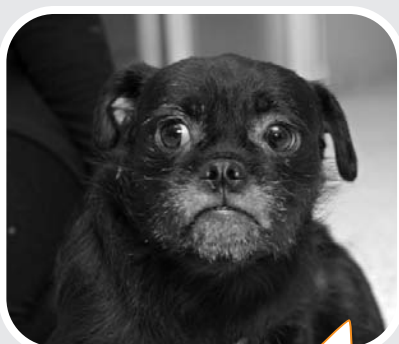
YES or NO



YES or NO



YES or NO



YES or NO



YES or NO