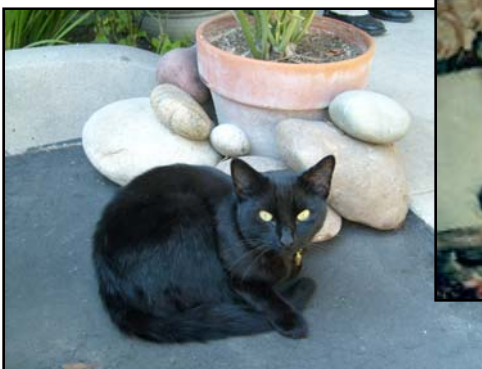


Ten ways to stay safe around cats and dogs

Cats and dogs are wonderful friends, but they are animals, so treat them with the respect and caution that any animal requires.

1. Stay away from an angry or frightened pet, even your own. Any angry or frightened animal, including pets, can be very dangerous. Give it time to settle down and talk to it in a calm, soothing voice.
2. Don't approach a stray cat or dog. You don't know the animal's temperament or what diseases it might be carrying. If you feel sorry for the stray, put out some water and appropriate pet food and let it come to eat on its own terms.
3. If a stray dog comes up to you, especially a larger one, stay calm and stand still. Don't run and don't look directly at the dog; use your peripheral vision to keep an eye on it. Wait until it's gone before you move.
4. Always ask a pet owner if it's okay to touch a cat or dog that you don't know and that doesn't know you. When you go to pet the cat or dog, offer it the back of your hand first. That way if the pet does bite, your natural reflex is to ball your fist. If you offer an open palm and the pet bites, your reflexive fisting could result in grabbing the pet by the throat or teeth, possibly causing the pet to become even more frightened, with more biting along with defensive clawing. Both scratches and bites can be very painful. Also crouch down so that you are on the same level as the pet, thereby not looking as big and usually resulting in the pet not being as frightened. A pet is more likely to calm down and approach you peacefully if you're the same size as it.
5. Be gentle when petting a cat or dog. Lightly stroke its back and neck, avoiding the eyes and ears. Quick and unexpected movements can frighten or distress the cat or dog, possibly resulting in a defensive bite or scratch.
6. Never hit, kick, or spank a cat or dog, or pull its tail, or otherwise harm it. It may try to hurt you, and cat and dog teeth and claws can be very painful when they dig in to human flesh.
7. Play gently with your pet and stop playing if your pet gets too rough. Pets don't always know how rough they are, but you do. Playing can sometimes result in the pet hiding and then magically re-appearing, so be cautious so that they don't suddenly re-appear under your feet or between your legs and cause you to trip and fall.
8. Leave cats and dogs alone while they are sleeping. They sleep when and where they feel safe, so unexpected noises or touching can frighten them unnecessarily, perhaps resulting in a defensive bite or scratch.
9. Leave cats and dogs alone while they are eating, and never try to take away their food or toys, even as a joke. Survival, i.e., eating, is a basic instinct that can be met with a bite or scratch.
10. Avoid newborn puppies or kittens. The mother may fight to protect her young.

If you have any questions about anything, simply [contact me](#).



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