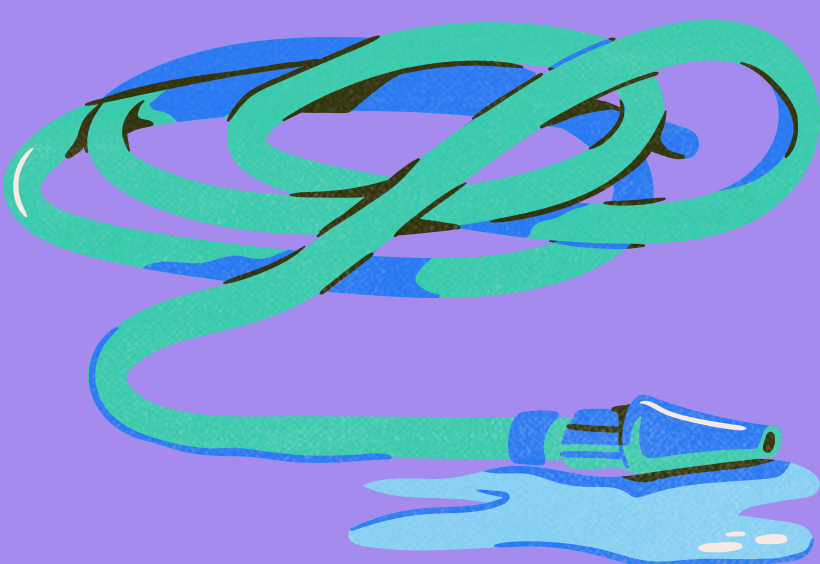


# How to *Safely* Break Up a Dog Fight



*Dog fights can be highly traumatic for dogs and humans alike. Although we hope you never need to use the knowledge shared in this handout, it's best to prepare for a dog fight in advance of it happening. If we don't plan in advance, we will be relying on our instinctive response during an incident (which may not produce the safest outcome).*

## Intervene using the environment, *not* your hands.



The golden rule of dog fights is: don't put your hands in! This could result in you accidentally being bitten, or one or both dogs redirecting onto you (i.e. attacking you instead of each other). Instead, put something else between the dogs so they are unable to bite each other. You can use any item at your disposal - look around your environment and get creative! Common items include: jackets, handbags, treat pouches, umbrellas, brooms, and big sticks. If a bucket of water or hose is available, pouring water over the dogs may also assist.

## If at high risk, carry helpful items.

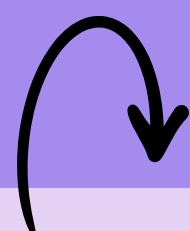
If you are at high risk of experiencing a dog fight (for example, because your dog is reactive or you live in an area with lots of off-leash dogs), or if you are particularly concerned about dog fights, there are some other items you may wish to carry. The following items can be helpful to break up a dog fight: mini airhorns, silly string, canned air, and Pet Corrector (citronella spray). Please note these items are for use in EMERGENCIES ONLY, and are NOT recommended for use in training. A bite stick is also a helpful tool. Bite sticks are bits of plastic designed to be inserted between the dog's back teeth during a bite. By twisting the bite stick, the dog's mouth will be forced to open. We recommend [this one from Aces Animal Care](#).



## The Wheelbarrow Technique

**This technique is to be used when the dogs are not latched together.**

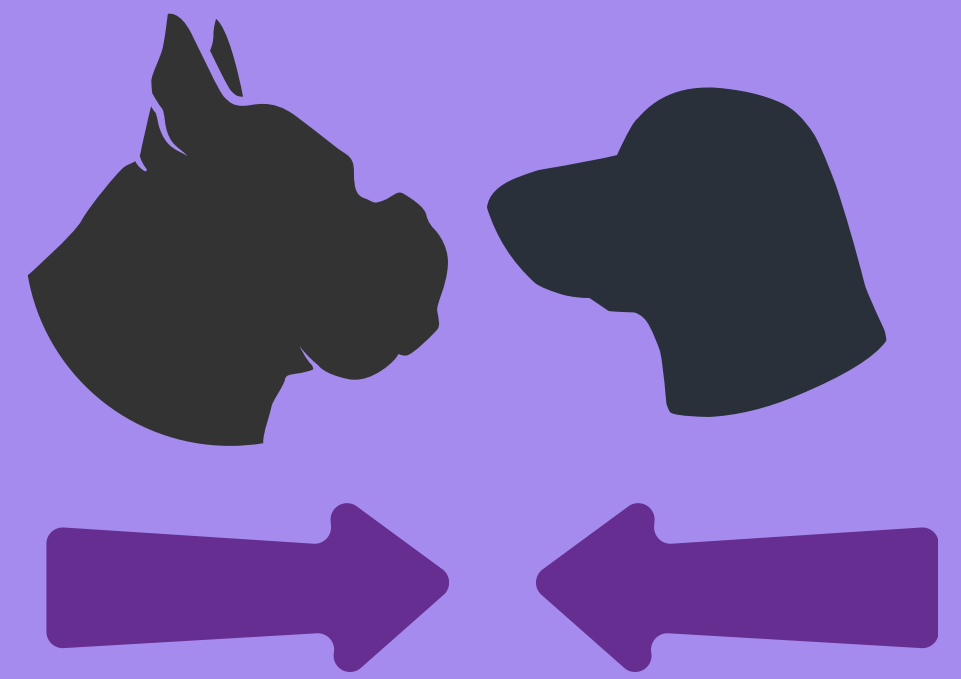
If the dogs are repeatedly biting each other but not holding onto one another, then you can separate them using the 'wheelbarrow' technique. To execute the wheelbarrow technique, grab the instigating dog's back legs, lift them up in the air, and walk backwards to 'wheelbarrow' the dog away. Beware as dexterous dogs may be able to bite you if you're not careful with your handling. Ideally, a second person will also be available to wheelbarrow the other dog away.



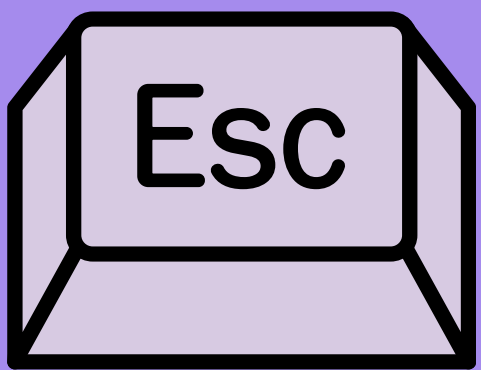
## The Push Together Technique

This technique is to be used when the dogs are latched together.

If one or both of the dogs are latching on to the other, you must NOT use the wheelbarrow method as this could result in serious injury. Instead, grip both dogs by the collar and quickly push their heads together, then apart. Pushing their heads together quickly will cause their jaws to release.



## Escaping Once Dogs are Separated



Once you have successfully separated the dogs, you should remove your dog as soon as possible to prevent another fight from breaking out. Ideally, another person will be available to remove the other dog. However, this is not always the case. If a second person is not available and the other dog is continuing to advance, use your environment to protect your dog. For example, you might place your dog behind a picket fence, on top of a car, or on top of or inside a bin to ensure the other dog cannot get to them. Do not pick your dog up and hold onto them as this may cause the other dog to attack you. Your safety is the priority.

## What to Do in the Aftermath

After you have escaped a dog fight, assess your dog to determine whether they have suffered any obvious injury. Most dog fights do not result in actual injury (just a lot of noise and flying fur!). If the fight is serious, there may be legal consequences. A fight is serious if one of the dogs has:

- punctured the other dog's skin;
- latched onto the other dog; or
- shaken the other dog (this indicates an intention to kill).



Please swap details with the other owner if possible, and if their dog is the instigator, consider reporting them to the relevant council. We also recommend that if your dog has been injured, they are taken to a vet for thorough examination and treatment. If a dog has been physically shaken, they may have suffered internal damage which can be fatal if left untreated. Be sure to go home and decompress - both you and your dog. There is no need to resume walks until you are both feeling confident to do so. If your dog initiated the fight, please contact a trainer via the Pet Professional Guild of Australia as soon as possible. If your dog did not initiate the fight, we recommend gradually reintroducing them to other dogs at a distance (in other words, don't go straight back to face to face greetings with strange dogs as this may frighten your dog). If your dog show signs of anxiety around other dogs after a fight, please contact a trainer via the Pet Professional Guild of Australia. Lastly, please seek support for yourself if you are struggling. We recommend Dr Vanessa Rohlf to assist with animal-related trauma: [drvanessarohlf.com.au](http://drvanessarohlf.com.au).