

# What To Do If A Dog Is Chasing You

I took a walk one morning with a few of my friends. We were in our neighborhood and I brought my dog, Denver, along because he needed exercise too. About 15 minutes into our walk, one of my friends nervously proclaimed, “There’s a dog off-leash over there.” And sure enough, I looked up to see a pitbull mix, off-leash, staring at us.



As soon as we noticed him, he began to race towards us. Immediately, my friends’ nervous anxiety turned to full panic. They screamed as I told them not to worry. They grabbed my arm as I told them to relax. The proclaimed they were going to be attacked as I told them the dog was friendly. Within a matter of seconds, the unknown dog had reached us and began a humorous (to me) playful dance with my dog, trying to solicit Denver to play. When Denver politely declined the invitation to play, the dog ran off again. I smiled and then noticed the terror in my friends’ faces.

As my friends began to breathe again, they hailed me a hero in the face of adversity while being “attacked by a dog.” And it dawned on me that we had seen the situation from two entirely different perspectives. Their perspective was we were being attacked by a dangerous dog. My perspective was that a friendly dog off-leash wanted to play with my dog. And in that instance, there was nothing either of us could do to change the other’s perspective.

My perspective comes from over 20 years of dealing with dogs, with a particular focus on off-leash behaviors. There was nothing in the dog’s body language that indicated he was aggressive. In fact, his exaggerated motions, loose, wiggly body language, and lateral movement while he approached us were clear indicators of play. And I knew my dog would not react, so there was nothing to worry about. I just stood calmly and waiting for the dog-to-dog greeting to happen.

But what would I have done if the dog were not friendly? What would I have done if I knew Denver wouldn’t have tolerated the strange dog? And what should you do if a dog is chasing you and you aren’t sure if it’s friendly?

These are questions that come up all the time from people who live in neighborhoods where dogs run off-leash. And let’s face it, not every dog wants to greet a strange dog. Not every person enjoys the company of an unknown dog. And not every off-leash dog is friendly. So what do you do if you see a dog off-leash?

Here are my usual suggestions:

- First – don't run. This is counterintuitive, but running will only cause a dog to chase and will likely create more arousal and aggression in the dog if he is already in an aroused state. Instead, stand still at first and then walk away slowly.
- Yell "SIT" or "GO HOME" – This will often make the average dog nervous enough to leave you alone. But be believable and yell with confidence.

For more persistent dogs, I would try the following:

- Take massive amounts of smelly, high value treats on a walk with you (chicken, liver, cheese, steak etc). If you see a loose dog throw a big handful of treats at the dog in the hope that he will stop to eat the treats while you move away.
- Take an umbrella with you on walks – the automatic kind that allows you to push a button to open it. Often, having an umbrella open suddenly into the face of an oncoming dog will scare the dog enough to disorient him and cause him to retreat. (NOTE...if you are going to use this method, make sure your dog is used to being on the other side of the umbrella when it opens, or you are likely to freak your own dog out!)
- Purchase [Spray Shield animal deterrent](#) to take with you on your walks. This is a form of citronella spray you can spray at a dog (think "mace for dogs"). The downside to this product is the dog has to be really close which is why I prefer using treats, but if you wind up trying to break up a dog fight, this might help.

If a dog is running full steam at you, it's hard to say if any of these methods will work, but they are worth a try. Despite the media hype, the vast majority of dogs off-leash are not trying to attack humans. For most dogs, yelling at them or throwing treats at them will work fine.

Information provided at:

<http://www.robinkbennett.com/2013/07/30/dog-chasing/>



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