**K9 CPR[[1]](#footnote-1)**

CPR stands for 'cardiopulmonary resuscitation' and is a life-saving procedure used to help dogs that have

1. **stopped breathing** and/or 2. **have no heartbeat**.

When a dog stops breathing, the oxygen levels in its bloodstream fall rapidly, and without oxygen vital organs such as the brain, liver, and kidneys, rapidly fail. Brain damage occurs within as little as 3 - 4 minutes of respiratory failure, so it’s crucial to act swiftly.

## Assess the Dog

#1 Call the vet or an emergency animal hospital. The first thing you need to do when you find a dog that appears to be in serious distress is to call for help.

#2 Get a passerby or friend to phone the emergency vet so that you can immediately begin administering first aid if you determine that the dog isn’t breathing.

#3 Because it will take time for emergency assistance to arrive, you’ll need to begin care as soon as possible and continue until help arrives.

#4 Determine if the dog is breathing.

A collapsed dog that is unconscious may still be breathing, and if the dog’s still breathing, CPR is not required. So it’s imperative that you first determine whether CPR is necessary before beginning.

#5 To determine if the dog is breathing, watch for a subtle rise and fall of the chest. A dog normally takes between 20 - 30 breaths a minute, which means its chest will move every 2 - 3 seconds. If you can’t see the chest moving, place your cheek close to the dog’s nose to feel for air flow against your skin.

#6 If his chest does not move and you can't feel air movement, the dog is not breathing.

#7 Check for a heartbeat. To locate the heart, lay the dog on its side, swing its front elbow back to the point where it meets the chest wall. That point is the third to fifth intercostal space, which is where the heart lies.

#8 Watch the chest wall at this point on the chest and look for signs of the dog’s hairs moving in time with a heartbeat. If you don’t see any movement, place your fingers over that same point on the chest and apply gentle pressure, feeling for the bump of a heartbeat against your fingertips.

#9 If you can’t feel a heartbeat, check for a pulse on the dog’s wrist. Run your fingertip along and under the main stop pad (the pad that doesn’t touch the ground) on the back of the front foot and press gently to feel for a pulse.

#10 Check that the dog’s airway is clear. Open its mouth and check the back of its throat for blockages.

#11 An obstruction at the back of the throat can block the dog’s air supply and interfere with resuscitation, so if you discover any blockages, remove them before starting CPR.

#12 Remove anything blocking the dog's airway. If the dog has a heartbeat, you'll want to concentrate on breathing for the dog. Before beginning, remove any blockages from the dog’s mouth, including any vomit, blood, mucus, or foreign material.

## Performing CPR[[2]](#footnote-2)

#1 Position the dog for artificial respiration. Pull the dog's tongue forward. Align the head with the back, and tilt it back a little to help open the airway.

#2 Place your mouth over the airway. If it’s a small dog, place your mouth over the dog's nose and mouth. If it’s a large dog, place your mouth over the dog's nostrils.

#3 Hold one hand under the lower jaw to close it. Place the thumb of the same hand on top of the nose the hold the mouth shut. Alternately, you can cup both hands around the mouth (and lips if it’s a large dog). It’s important that you prevent air from escaping through the mouth.

#4 Administer artificial respiration. Blow firmly enough into the dog's snout to lift the dog's chest wall. If the chest rises easily (as is likely in a small dog), stop blowing once it has gently lifted. If you continue blowing, you may damage the dog’s lungs. Then release your lips to allow the air to escape.

#5 Aim for 20 - 30 breaths a minute, or one breath every 2 - 3 seconds.

#6 Get ready to begin chest compressions. The heart pumps oxygenated blood to the organs, so if you’re giving artificial respiration but there’s no heartbeat, the oxygen can’t get where it’s needed and you’ll need to provide chest compressions as well as artificial respiration.

#7 The goal is to perform chest compressions and artificial respiration in a pattern of **1 artificial breath for 10- 12 chest compressions.**

#8 Find the dog's heart. Locate the heart by laying the dog on its side and swinging its front elbow back to the point where it meets the chest wall, which is where the heart lies.

#9 Perform chest compressions. Lay your palm over the heart and press down gently but firmly--use enough pressure to compress the chest to one-third or one-half of its depth. The compression is a quick, rapid movement: compress-release, compress-release, repeated 10 - 12 times around every 5 seconds.

#10 Give one artificial respiration breath and then repeat the cycle.

#11 Stop periodically to assess the situation. Stop every 2 minutes and check if the dog has resumed breathing for itself. If not, continue artificial respiration until help arrives

#12 Perform abdominal compressions if the dog is a very large breed. A large or giant breed may benefit from abdominal compressions, which can help return blood to the heart, but these should not be done at the expense of cardiac compression

#13 To give a dog abdominal compressions, gently compress the front part of the belly, where large organs such as the spleen and liver are located.

#14 You can also add an “abdominal squeeze,” which can assist recirculation of blood to the heart, by slipping your left hand under the dog’s abdomen and using your right hand to "squeeze" the abdomen between your two hands. Repeat this movement once every two minutes or so--but if you have your hands full with chest compressions and artificial respiration, leave this element out.

1. http://www.wikihow.com/index.php?title=Perform-CPR-on-a-Dog&action=edit [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. http://www.wikihow.com/index.php?title=Perform-CPR-on-a-Dog&action=edit [↑](#footnote-ref-2)