

## Why puppies bite?



# Puppy Biting! Ouch!

**"PAWS-IBILITIES!"**  
WITH DOGS!



Puppies use their mouths to explore everything! Plus, they are teething! Chewing is a natural and instinctual behavior. Puppies often mouth or bite to get their 'needs met' - just like a baby whines or cries. We often 'play' with puppies, using our hands & mistakenly teach them to treat our hands, arms, ankles as play-toys! If puppy is over-tired or over-stimulated he may have less ability to control his biting. **Puppies need a lot of sleep to learn** and remember what he has learned! Be in tune with puppy & settle him for a nap before they turn into a 'dinosaur'! (Hint: settle your puppy in a quiet, non-stimulating space for undisturbed rest. This also builds comfort with solitude and confinement!)



## Games to teach puppy 'no teeth on me':

1. Use handfeeding and treat delivery to teach a **soft mouth.**



a.) Deliver treats from your palm only. Puppy will use his tongue to 'lick up' the treat. Puppy can't 'bite' at the treat this way, & he learns to use ONLY lips or tongue to take the treat.

b.) Hand-feed portions of puppy's meal to teach that hands are a 'great' thing, not to be bitten!

\*also teach puppy how to wait for permission to take a treat rather than grabbing. Ask us how!

2. Play & Freeze - when you feel any teeth on skin or clothes. Simply stop all the fun. Hide hands behind your back if puppy keeps at them; if absolutely necessary, gently & calmly take puppy's collar to hold puppy still at arm's length until he settles, then let go of his collar to see what his next choice is - will he forget about biting?

3. Distract - distract puppy from 'attacks' or 'crazy nipping' by giving an interactive toy to get him engage elsewhere and to keep him busy until he settles down. 'Treat Dispensing' balls, 'snuffle mats' or 'puzzle toys are great options! Careful not to reinforce biting by simply giving a toy: it's best to ask for a behavior in between, like calm, or a sit, etc.

4. Collar Hold - reach for puppy's collar frequently and randomly throughout the day.

Reach, hold, 'Good Boy', treat. Associate great things with you reaching towards him & holding his collar.

5. Food Choices & Permission - teaches puppy to control his 1st impulses to simply 'grab' food or toys, and begins the foundation for teaching 'permission' ('Get It). Treat in closed hand, open hand, puppy sits to wait for treat to be delivered to him - or you close hand. Next level, food on floor, puppy sits, waits for permission to 'Get It'.



6. Body Handling - teaches puppy to accept 'hands' all over his body, without nipping. Great for vet exams, grooming...and cuddles! Best started at times when puppy is sleepy. Sit on the floor, settle puppy between your legs, on his side, then onto his back.



Step #1: Touch as you deliver a treat; Step #2: touch, mark and then deliver a treat, Step #3: wait for puppy to look away from the treat, then touch, mark, then deliver a treat. Build up to touching longer!

Touch paws, every toe, ears, fingers in mouth, lift lips, touch tail, massage the length of puppy's whole body, hold puppy close. Put a t-shirt on & off puppy! Put socks on and off puppy's feet. Do a 'dry bath' as practice!

7. Tug - teaches puppy to put his teeth on appropriate toys only. 'Game On' if puppy only bites the toy: 'Game Off' if puppy's teeth touch your hand: you simply freeze & the fun stops!

Next level, hold the toy back, covered in your hands, until puppy sits, then say 'Get It' and tug starts up again! Next level is to tug, and add body massages while tugging! 'Game On'/'Game Off' is still in play! Teaching your puppy to 'give' or 'out' or 'drop' can also be a cue to use when he bites at something inappropriate. Freeze. wait. Be sure to reinforce when he does in fact let go and take his teeth away.



8. Ensure puppy gets lots of rest. He could simply be over-tired, over-stimulated, frustrated, and/or over-excited. Puppy needs quiet time, naps and time to rest! If biting gets crazy, put puppy in an expen or crate. Be sure puppy's routine is consistent & reliable, with clarity around your expectations, so puppy is indeed less frustrated.



## **Tools to teach your puppy to 'chew' appropriately (always supervise!):**

Frozen Kongs, large frozen carrots, cold antlers, large frozen Bully Sticks, are great for chewing & can prevent biting! (hint: keep several items in your freezer so you have lots to pull out when puppy biting needs to be redirected!)

**How do you 'correct' a puppy when he bites?** First - are all his needs met? Hunger, thirst, fatigue and toileting? Next, if necessary, freeze...all fun stops when teeth touch skin. Remove your hands - simply freeze & put hands behind your back. Give puppy an alternate & appropriate chew toy. If puppy absolutely won't stop: 1.) leave the room so puppy can realize 'nipping' makes you go away. 2.) 'Time outs' to a crate/expen is the prize for biting! "Oh boy...you win the prize!" Short, 2 minute time outs are best! You'll likley find he needed a nap!

**Important: Never use your hands or feet as play toys with your puppy. No yelling, no smacking, no pushing, no pinching, no sudden (fun) movements which only reinforce biting.**