

Dog 101

Puppy Mouthing or Play-biting

Biting is one of the most common complaints made by owners of puppies. Puppies have needle-sharp teeth and seem to enjoy chewing on hands, arms, pant legs, and anything else they can get their mouths on!

Just because your puppy bites doesn't mean you have an aggressive or bad dog. Investigating things with their mouths is perfectly natural and normal for puppies. Chewing can also provide comfort.

There are some very simple steps you can take to teach your puppy exactly what's acceptable and what isn't. Before starting this exercise, make sure your pup has a couple of good-quality, acceptable toys. And remember to be consistent.



Steps to Prevent Puppy Mouthing

- 1 Avoid putting your hands (toes, etc.) near your puppy's mouth or playing with the pup with your hands.
- 2 Play with an appropriate toy. This can be a ball, stuffed animal, squeaky toy, rope, or any other toy. We also recommend freezable teething rings specifically made for puppies.
- 3 If your puppy puts her mouth on you (even if it doesn't hurt) or grabs your clothes, give a loud, high-pitched "yelp!" or "ouch!" Make sure it's loud enough to distract the puppy and make her let go.
- 4 As soon as the puppy is distracted (lets go of your fingers), immediately encourage the pup to play with her toy.
- 5 Give lots of praise when the pup has the toy in her mouth instead of your hand.
- 6 For persistent mouthers, give a loud ouch the next time she latches on to you and walk away. Then ignore the pup. Don't pet, lecture, punish or look at your pup. Even if she follows you around, continue to ignore the pup, no matter how hard it is.
- 7 After a few minutes of ignoring your puppy, try to play again with an appropriate toy. If she mouths you again, repeat the step above.
- 8 After a few minutes of ignoring your puppy, try to play again with an appropriate toy. If she mouths you again, repeat the step above.
- 9 Never use physical punishment as this will teach your puppy that people are dangerous and unpredictable and that hands can hurt. Punishment doesn't teach them what we want to do, rather redirecting to an appropriate chew toy does.

Eventually your puppy will get the idea that if she wants to play with you, she has to keep her teeth to herself!

