

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, toes, pant legs, shirt sleeves and anything else they can get their mouths on.

Just because your pup bites probably does not mean you've got an aggressive or bad dog. It could simply mean you've got a normal dog. **Investigating things with their mouths is perfectly natural and normal for puppies.**

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 **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 that your dog likes and you approve of as a chew toy.
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. Should your puppy decide to grab your hand (foot, shirt, etc.) again, give a loud "ouch!" and redirect the pup's attention to the toy.
6. Give lots of praise when the pup has the toy in her mouth instead of your hand.
7. **For persistent mouthers, when the puppy latches on to your hand, give a loud "ouch!" and walk away, ignoring the pup.** *Ignoring means: Don't pet your pup; Don't lecture your pup; Don't punish your pup; Don't talk to your pup; Don't even look at your pup.* Your puppy will probably follow you around. That's OK. Dogs are very social creatures who love to be near their people. Continue to ignore the pup, no matter how hard it is.
8. After a few minutes of ignoring your puppy, try to play with her again...with an appropriate toy. If she mouths you again, "yelp!" and ignore.

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