



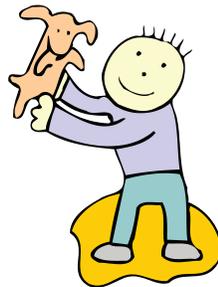
Puppy Biting 101

Ouch, those puppy teeth sure are sharp! When those sharp little teeth connect a few times with skin and clothes, it might seem like you are raising a shark, and not a cute little puppy. Luckily, your puppy has not turned into the evil counterpart of your sweet pooch, nor is he being aggressive; this is a normal part of your puppy's social development. Biting and exploring with their teeth—like babies when they put everything in their mouths—is your puppy's way of learning about being a dog. The good news is that your puppy will quickly grow out of this stage if you handle it correctly.

This is a great time to teach your puppy how to inhibit his bite, as well as not to grab things like clothes and, especially to learn to chew on appropriate items. By teaching your puppy what he is allowed to chew on, and providing him lots of outlets for that need to chew, you will not only train him to give up any future puppy clothes designer job he might have in mind with your pants, but to stop putting his teeth on people and things in general.

What you can do:

1. Tone your puppy down from the inside by feeding him a high-end brand of dog food. Refer to our handout on how diets affects behavior, but in short, look for foods without corn, wheat or soy products, as these are known to cause sensitivities in many puppies. Be sure you are feeding at least three to four times a day in these early months so your puppy doesn't suffer from behavior problems associated with hunger, such as carbohydrate crashes.
2. Make sure your puppy is getting enough rest. Many people forget that young puppies are just babies and they need a lot of



sleep. When they are not getting enough sleep and rest during the day, they are often cranky and/or so wound up that using their teeth on fun things such as your clothing or skin helps to relieve that stress. Puppies under 4 months should be resting or sleeping about 70-75% of the day, so if your puppy is not getting this kind of recovery from play and interactions with people, he may just be cranky.

3. Over-stimulating touching and handling can also teach your puppy to bite. It's very important to remember that you are living with a different species that doesn't have hands. Hands can seem threatening to some puppies, so always go slow when you want to pet or touch your puppy. Try to keep in mind that canines communicate differently than humans and overly arousing touching and handling can quickly send a young puppy over-the-top where he is more likely to use his mouth in retaliation to how he is being petted or handled.
4. Slow your hands down with your puppy, and use what I call an "Ask and Release" system to give your puppy a chance to indicate if he likes the way you are petting or handling him. To do this, reach out and touch your puppy, then take your hand away; and then just wait to see what your puppy does. Does he get aroused and nippy, does he move forward softly like he would like more, or does he leave? That is all information for you. If your puppy does come forward softly, touch him again for just a slight bit longer, then remove your hand and observe again. Also, keep in mind that most dogs don't enjoy being patted on the head, so try under the chin, or just behind the ears to keep your puppy calmer.
5. If your puppy has his sights and teeth on one particular member of the family (this happens to kids a lot) then you will want to prevent the behavior from happening. The less access your puppy has to the

“anointed one” the faster the behavior will fade away. As you teach your puppy new skills, such as “Sit,” and how to come when called, these other annoying behaviors will be replaced with the new and appropriate behaviors you teach your puppy. Until then, prevention is important, since allowing a puppy access to bite someone is allowing your puppy to practice the behavior, and we all know that practice makes perfect.

6. To stop your puppy from general puppy biting or tearing your clothes, be prepared! Grabbing clothes is a very fun tug-o-war game that pays off in a big way: First, your puppy gets to play with your clothes, and second, he gets you involved as you struggle to get him to let go—big bonus! What you will have to think about is preventing the biting behaviors in the first place. That means having wonderful chew toys, such as Bully Sticks, pressed rawhides, stuffed Kongs, or even old socks that are tied into knots, and soaked in water and then frozen can make a great chew toys that relieves teething pain. The secret to success for these distractions to work is to give your puppy these items before he begins biting or tugging on clothes. If your puppy keeps receiving them after he has started biting, he may put it together that biting at you or your clothes will make you bring out the good stuff. Furthermore, once your puppy is already at the point of biting, you can only do damage control, by quietly disengaging his mouth and distracting him to do something else. Then promise yourself you will be prepared better the next time.
7. To keep your puppy’s teeth off things that are really important to you, use a taste deterrent (Bitter Apple, Foofey, etc.) on the items to make them taste yucky to you puppy. You will need to re-apply each day as these wear out pretty fast.
8. Recognize that your puppy might have a need that he is unable to express, and is using his teeth to get your attention. Ask

yourself when the last time your puppy had a nap, a drink, a potty break, or a meal. All of these things can cause more biting.

9. Try to avoid giving your puppy attention when he is in the mood for biting. By telling your puppy, “No,” pushing him away, or other means of trying to stop your puppy from biting, you are actually giving him a lot of attention for the very behavior you don’t want. Please, never smack, hit or hold your puppy’s mouth for biting—all can make the biting worse and can damage your relationship with your puppy. Puppies crave human attention (they have been domesticated to humans, after all) and even if it’s not optimal attention, negative responses can be rewarding to a puppy. It’s better to quietly disengage and plan to have chew toys, and such around to get into your puppy’s mouth before he starts to bite.