



## Puppy Biting

Puppy biting is a very normal part of puppy behaviour.

Puppies investigate the world through their mouths. If it is within reach, it will probably be picked up and chewed! This obviously includes us!

Puppies interact and play with other puppies and dogs by chewing and biting each other. They learn bite inhibition through these play sessions by yelping and walking away from a puppy who was over enthusiastic in their mouthing! Their mother will teach them to be gentle when suckling by demonstrating her displeasure in their 'biting' of the nipple and removing herself from the over zealous puppy.

We too, have to teach our puppies that they need to be gentle with their mouths around humans. We have to remember that we are not dogs and cannot emulate them with any great success! Yelping at them can encourage some puppies to bite harder as we have become a big 'squeaky toys'!

Growling at them will just intimidate and frighten a lot of puppies which will not help you build a healthy relationship.

### So, how do we deal with puppy biting?

1. Give your puppy plenty of opportunities to bite appropriate items. These include stuffed kongs, nyla bones, raw hide, stuffed marrow bones and toys (balls and tuggy toys.)
2. Engage you dog in vigorous games of tug of war as often as possible. Not only will it help with puppy biting but it will also greatly help you to bond and strengthen your relationship.
3. Whenever you interact with your puppy when they are in an excitable state, **MAKE SURE** you offer them something to bite **before** they start to bite you. Praise them for the correct behaviour.
4. IF your puppy chooses to bite you even though you have offered them the tug toy, just calmly remove the pup or yourself (whichever is more appropriate). Let them calm down for a minute or 2 and then try interacting with them again by offering the tug toy. Repeat the above step until they chose correctly!
5. Ensure your tug toys are long enough and soft enough for your puppy to happily bite. The longer the toy the better with a puppy (less chance of accidental biting of fingers!) Some examples of good tug toys are: old dressing gown ties, towels or fleeces ripped into three sections and then plaited together.
6. Keep the interactive toys out of your pups reach whilst they are not being played with. It will keep them more novel which means the pup is more likely to want to bite and play with them when given the opportunity. Plant toys around the house and garden (out of puppies reach) so you have them easily accessible and as much as possible, take the game outside.
7. Rotate chew items that you leave on the floor to also keep them interesting.

**If your puppy just likes to carry items in their mouth when they get excited, try this:**

- Offer an item whenever you or others come into contact with the pup
- As you offer the item, say 'get it'
- After a while try asking them to 'get' an item lying on the floor before they get attention
- Most pups will then start to automatically look for something to pick up when they get excited. Just ensure there are appropriate items around and guide them to the item if necessary
- Praise and give attention for the correct behaviour

We also need to teach pups '**bite inhibition**' so that if they are ever put into a situation where their automatic reaction is to bite, it will be very soft. To do this:

- Pick a time where your pup is *calm*
- Allow them to gently 'mouth' you
- If, at any point your pup bites harder, end the interaction by calmly walking away
- Gradually, over a period of time, aim for softer and softer 'mouthing'.
- In your mind, know what level is acceptable and what is not. End the interaction when the bite is harder than you wanted.
- Eventually you should get a pup who very gently and carefully will mouth you without a hard bite at all.
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NB Whenever your pup is excitable use the tug toy and play a game to satisfy their biting urges. Do not even attempt to get them to mouth you gently as it just won't happen!