

Upper Valley Dog Behavior Consulting and Training

PUPPY BITING

Puppy biting is normal behavior and, in fact, is essential. Puppy teeth are needle sharp, yet their jaws are quite weak. In most cases, they cannot cause serious harm. You need to teach your puppy that biting is not an acceptable behavior. You will teach this in stages.

A puppy must first learn to inhibit the force of his bite to ensure that he has a soft mouth before he becomes an adult dog and develops teeth and jaws that could inflict serious injuries. Most dog bites occur during adolescence (6 - 12 mos) and at maturity (2 - 3 yrs).

The 3 main reasons dogs bite are:

- 1 - The dog lacks confidence and finds humans threatening.
- 2 - Biting is fun, enjoyable and normal canine behavior.
- 3 - The dog has an aggressive disposition.

Do not expect biting to be eliminated overnight.

There are 3 steps to teaching a puppy to stop biting:

- 1 - Inhibiting force
- 2 - Inhibiting frequency of bites
- 3 - Stop biting all together

Step 1 - Inhibiting Force

Mouthing and biting are not allowed. Any pressure should be considered "painful". Trick the puppy into thinking that humans as well as their clothing and hair are extremely sensitive and any pressure is excruciatingly painful. Therefore, the puppy learns the biting rule that any pressure during mouthing is not allowed. To work on this, praise the puppy if he mouths softly and give a loud "OUCH" any time you feel pressure. This sometimes may cause the puppy to become even more mouthy. If it does, you need to be a little more dramatic by giving your puppy an angry look. Give the puppy a one or two minute time-out. This teaches him that biting does not mean play, but instead, his playmate walks away. After a minute or two, return to him, command him to sit and give him lots of praise. Don't hold a grudge. You must "make up" in order to maintain puppy's confidence and show that you are not mad at him, but you do not like his behavior. Some puppies are physically tough but emotionally they are extremely sensitive. They hate to lose their playmates and be left alone.

Puppies learn to inhibit the force of their bite while playing with one another. If one puppy bites too hard, the "bitee" yelps and stops play. They look at each other and the "biter" will have a look on his face as if to say "sorry". Play then resumes, but the biting is now less forceful.

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Step 2 - Inhibiting frequency of bites

Occasional gentle mouthing is permitted, but now you should begin to give a warning such as "NO BITE" when the mouthing becomes too frequent. Whenever your puppy's mouthiness becomes too rough or prolonged, a loud "OUCH" and "NO BITE" should be used. If the puppy does not stop biting, follow up your warning with a firm reprimand. Stare into his eyes and repeat "NO BITE". Continue glaring for a few seconds and then walk away from the puppy and ignore him. After a few minutes, there must be a make up period. If the mouthing occurs during the make up period that means your warning was not effective. If there is no mouthing, then you know that the reprimand was effective. The puppy will soon learn that if he continues the mouthing after he hears the warning "NO BITE", he will be reprimanded and you will leave. YOU MUST ALWAYS GIVE YOUR WARNING BEFORE THE REPRIMAND OCCURS.

Step 3 - Stop biting all together

By the time your puppy is 5 months of age, he should not be exerting any pressure whatsoever. Once your puppy respects the warning, he is now taught to never mouth people at all. If the puppy starts to mouth at any time, there will never be a warning again. YOU WILL GIVE AN IMMEDIATE REPRIMAND EACH AND EVERY TIME.

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