



Teeth and Biting

Help! I don't want to get bitten or my house chewed. What can I do?

It is a fact of life; all dogs need to chew things. It is part of normal development in growing puppies and adolescent dogs. Chewing releases energy, relieves boredom, loneliness, helps with teething, keeps dogs mentally stimulated, substitutes for lack of exercise, and is a highly pleasurable activity. When we bring a puppy into our lives we should expect chewing and biting.

Bite inhibition is learned through interaction with litter mates and other dogs. Biting humans is never okay and while it generally goes away once the pup is through the teething stage it is a behaviour that we want to discourage rather than encourage. However, some of our behaviour can inadvertently reward the puppy for his actions so let's look at how we can set up the pup for success and reduce frustration for everyone.

Firstly, what we can do to help our puppy do the right thing?

Manage your environment – Puppies explore everything to gain information about their world, chewing is part of that understanding. Puppies should be supervised at all times or put into a crate or ex-pen for short periods if you are unable to watch them. Make sure that your puppy is in an area of the home that is puppy proofed. Pick up items that you value and put them away for a few months. Make sure that doors are closed to areas that are not puppy ready. Encourage your children and teens to pick up after themselves!

Offer Good Alternatives – Chewing is a great way for pups to use up their energy and to dispel frustration. Make sure that your puppy has a variety of appropriate things to chew on. We recommend Kong or Busy Buddy products; they are not easily destroyed and are safe. Some of the cheaper toys are not really dog safe and pieces break off. Your puppy will likely ingest small pieces which and could cause harm (the last thing you need is an expensive vet bill because you have saved a couple of dollars on a cheap toy that your puppy has just chewed and swallowed).

Rotate your puppy's toys to prevent boredom. Keep life interesting, the same toys left out all the time become boring and get chewed up. Make a game of letting your pup pick a few from a box then put the rest away for another day.



Rawhide can be cured with chemicals (if the product doesn't say chemical free then assume chemicals were used in the process). Supervise your puppy with any rawhide chew, make sure that he doesn't chew off large chunks and choke.

Stuffed toys are great fun for your puppy but should also be used with supervision. Check them frequently, remove as soon as you see holes in the seams or body or if stuffing starts to come out. Stuffing can be very dangerous for puppies to ingest. Try tying a long string to a soft toy and dragging toys along the ground to get your puppy to chase, this keeps human hands and body parts away from those sharp teeth.

Kong Classic is a great toy to be stuffed with some of your dog's daily food allowance, and small amounts of peanut butter, cheese whiz or low fat cream cheese along with kibble. Keep several in the freezer to hand out when you are busy, leaving the house or just need five minutes peace. As an added bonus you have the ideal toy to help your pup sooth those inflamed gums while keeping him amused.

Treat dispensing toys and food puzzles are an excellent way of tiring out your dog and stimulating his mental state. While he is working at getting food out of a dispenser he is not chewing the leg of the chair, the table or your new shoes.

Keep a basket with various treat dispensing toys already filled with food and other toys so that you can easily grab them and divert attention to something more positive

Bite Prevention

Biting is normal, natural and very necessary part of puppy development. When your puppy starts to bite you he is trying to engage you in play just as he would his litter mates. Generally this is not aggression, although puppies will bite if they are overwhelmed, scared or frightened. Biting out of fear is not play biting and should be evaluated by a qualified animal professional immediately.

When puppies bite one another too hard, one pup will yelp and the play stops briefly then resumes in a gentler fashion. Puppies know that we are not their litter mates, often when we shout ,yell or punish the dog it does nothing more than teach the puppy that we are unpredictable and frightening. Worse the yelling inadvertently reinforces the unwanted behaviour, exciting the pup and adding to the agitation which in turn causes him to bite harder rather than cease the game.



What can you do?

The instant your puppy's teeth touch your skin or clothes, freeze say "oops" in a calm, cheerful, tone and slowly withdraw yourself from the situation (remember puppies like to chase so quick movements will encourage your puppy to chase, and capture). Stand up, fold your arms and look away. Wait 2-3 seconds and then resume play using a more suitable toy. You will need to repeat this over and over as puppies learn by repetition.

Should biting continue calmly say "that is enough" allow your pup time to stop, if he does then use a toy to redirect play, if not then follow with "Too bad" and a 30 second to 3 minute time out in the crate or quiet area to allow the pup to calm down. (We do not advocate getting violent at this point or handling the dog roughly, a quiet tone works best). Once quiet, resume play as if nothing has happened, no penalties or grudges. Again, it is imperative that this be done in a calm and quiet manner as the goal is to reduce excitability, making it clear that this is a consequence of his action while still keeping the crate a positive place to be. This will need to be done over and over again. Remember repetitions build behaviour.

Giving your dog an alternative toy to play with is not rewarding the biting behaviour but simply redirecting a baby to a more suitable activity. He will eventually learn to substitute toys when he feels the need to use his teeth.

Puppies and Children

Supervise puppies and children at all times. Your puppy will have times when he is more active and excitable, after a few days and careful observance you will know when your puppy has quiet times in his cycle. This is a great time to allow the children to interact with the puppy. Make sure he has been well exercised first and that there are toys on ropes for your children to drag around. If your puppy gets over excited instruct children to "Be A Tree" (puppies don't bite trees). Stand perfectly still, fold their arms, don't look at the puppy, shake legs, shout or scream. They may at this point call out for an adult to come and help them. Make sure that your approach is calm and quiet use the words "Too Bad" while gently taking the puppy and giving him a two minute time out in the crate or another room.



What not to do

Do not use Physical or verbal reprimands- shouting "No", hitting the dog on the nose , grabbing the muzzle, pinching lips or forcing your fingers down the dogs throat. These methods do not teach the dog anything other than you are unpredictable and cannot be trusted which could cause a hand or head shy dog leading to serious behaviour problems as your dog grows.

Never leave puppies and children unsupervised. This is a recipe for disaster, both have a tendency to let play get out of control and while things generally start off as fun someone or "some pup" will end up getting out of control and get hurt.

Remember.....

- You now have a plan to deal with this stage in your new pups life.
- This is a stage that your puppy must go through.
- He is just a baby discovering his world and trying to fit in with a new family/species very different than his own. Be considerate of him.
- Being calm and predictable will get you the best results and will enhance the Human- Canine bond.
- Once your puppy is about 6 months (9 months in small breeds) he will have all his adult teeth and will no longer feel the need to mouth anything and everything he sees.
- Repetitions build behaviour.
- Good choices build the best relationship for you, family and your puppy.

We hope this leaflet will help make life a little more pleasant during the early weeks of your puppy's life and assist you and your family in getting through this difficult stage that we humans find such an annoying, frustrating part of living with baby from a different species.

If you feel despite this information, biting is out of control please contact **Carolark - The Canine Learning Centre** for further assistance.

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