

Puppy Biting? Mouthiness? How to Stop and Prevent it!

All puppies explore their world with their mouths. Your puppy is dependent on you teaching them what, when and how they are allowed to use their mouths. You must determine the bite inhibition for your puppy's mouth on humans. Do you want this mouth to be soft or hard? Keep this lesson ongoing. If it is your clothing, use the same plan.

If your puppy chews, bites or mouths tell the puppy in a higher-pitched voice - OUCH! YIPE! This high-pitched voice will usually startle the puppy long enough to often stop them from biting. However, if the puppy is encouraged or aroused by the OUCH, then take a toy or an acceptable chew item and "re-direct" the puppy to chew on that instead. If the puppy continues to bite, STOP! Stand up or put the puppy down and walk away. The puppy will learn after many times delivering the same "message" - the message is that biting gets the person to leave them. Yes it will take many, many times or maybe even months of being consistent to help some puppies learn not to bite or mouth people.

It is very important to understand that any people who interact with your puppy need to be consistent, persistent about how they react to mouthiness. If one person discourages mouthiness and one person encourages it, you will end up with a very confused puppy that will continue to mouth people.

It is equally important to remember your puppy will not stop biting or mouthing overnight. It does take time, but **Persistence, Insistence, Consistency, Patience, and Communication** will make you and your puppy successful.

CONSIDER SOME GENERAL GUIDELINES:

There are some guidelines for teaching your pup how to have a soft mouth.

1. First, avoid playing games that might encourage rough mouthiness, such as teasing with your hands, grabbing your pup around the nose, etc. Use toys to play

with your puppy - teach the puppy the toys' names. Toys in your hands, toys in their mouths - keeps those sharp teeth off you.

2. Remember, if your pup mouths you too roughly, put your hands out of reach and stop giving any more attention. **Playtime is over!** If your pup starts jumping on you or tries to continue mouthing you, you can:

- Leave the room and shut the door behind you, separating yourself from your pup.
- Ask your pup to do something else, such as "sit", and reward the good behavior.
- Yelp loudly, like the puppy would - this should be loud enough to startle your pup to stop them from mouthing, but not so loud as to be frightening. Afterwards, give your pup something appropriate to chew on, or attempt to pet your pup again while rewarding for appropriate behavior.

3. As you are working on preventing the rough mouth, you should encourage your pup to be giving gentle mouth contact by allowing some gentle "gumming" of your hand occasionally. As soon as the tooth contact becomes too rough, all play stops instantly. Teaching pups what is an "acceptable" amount of tooth pressure is just as important as preventing rough chewing, in teaching them to have a softer mouth.

4. Give your pup something appropriate to chew on instead of your hand, such as a favorite chew toy, bone, bully stick, or try the Kong™ toy with treats inside. Remember, puppies need to chew - just not your hands, arms or feet.

5. Teach your puppy a cue "take it." This will teach your puppy to have gentle mouths or what we call bite inhibition. Remember you may over the course of your puppy's life need to remove something from your puppy's mouth. Begin teaching "take it" by placing a treat in your fist, next to the puppy's nose, offer the treat. Don't move your hand around, remain frozen, and stay patient. You are waiting for the puppy to stop biting, chewing, or nosing hand, then ask your puppy to "take it" and present the treat in an open palm. Practice several times so your puppy learns the association, "take it" means take something out of your hand and put it in their mouth. Again, if your puppy chews, bites or mouths tell him OUCH and remember to FREEZE your hand movement but keep your fist closed. Repeat the lesson many times over the early stages of your puppy's development. This will create a puppy that will have a soft mouth.

Dog Training by PJ

5303 Louie Lane #19, Reno, Nevada 89511

www.dogtrainingbybj.com

775-828-0748

Reference Library Materials © 2008 Dog Training by PJ

Don't punish your puppy's bite by holding his mouth shut, scolding, scruffing them, yanking on their collars, shoving your fingers down their throat, or doing anything else that is aversive. You want to be able to put your fingers inside their mouths to brush their teeth, do a physical examination of the teeth, gums and open their mouths. Most important, you don't wish to create a head-shy puppy that will not want to be touched around the head or mouth again; or worse yet, your puppy may feel threatened enough to react defensively with a hard bite.

Keep playtime fun by rewarding appropriate play with attention, praise and rewards and punish the inappropriate play (biting hard) **with the removal of the same things**. Reinforcements will improve the behavior you are seeking, while removing the reinforcers (rewards) are punishments enough for the puppy.

When all else fails, remember you have the ability to remove yourself from your puppy; try a time-out for a few minutes behind a baby-gate or you step in another room. Remove "you" from the equation (the biting one) - this will make a huge impact.

INGREDIENTS TO SUCCESS:

Persistence means the continuance of an effect - do not give up. Don't think your puppy or dog is too stubborn to train. All dogs improve and eventually learn: some may take more effort. Start your puppy early! In fact, "the risk of a dog dying because of infection with distemper or parvo disease is far less a risk than a dog dying (euthanasia) because of a behavior problem." *Robert K. Anderson, DVM, Diplomat of American College of Veterinary Preventive Medicine and Diplomat of American College of Veterinary Behaviorists.*

Insistence means to take and maintain a stand or make a firm request. Make sure your dog complies with your request. In other words, if you ask your dog to sit, he has to sit, if you ask him to come, he should come. Training is the only way to help your dog understand "what you want." Remember English is a second language for your dog and it must be taught to them.

Consistency means conformity with previous practice, same principles and practice. This means everyone in contact with your puppy or dog need to train using the same methods. It is important that all family members verbalize, or signal the same cues and utilize the training methods the same so the puppy learns.

Patience means being patient, endurance or perseverance in the performance of a task. Your task is to teach your puppy or dog. They are not pre-programmed, they have "dog behaviors" and we want them to "act like a human" in regards to manners or behaviors. So, teach your puppy the ways of our world. Communication is one of the keys to success.

Communication means the act of transmitting or giving information, signals or messages. Your task is to communicate with your puppy or dog and teach them what you want them to learn. Try not to focus on what you don't want, but rather what do you want in the alternative. Communicate so your puppy understands, yelling, striking, or physical abuse is not communication. Use learning theory - Positive Reinforcement (increases behaviors) and with Negative Punishment (decreases behaviors.) Negative means removing something the puppy finds "rewarding!" Don't resort to physical abuse or antiquated methods or myths on "how to stop a puppy from biting." Use puppy management too. See the Resource Materials on Puppy Management.