

## Puppy Biting

Mouthing and biting are very normal behaviors for puppies. They investigate things with their mouths just as human babies do. Since puppies walk on all fours, they are only left with their mouths to explore. Puppies learn about their sharp teeth while playing with their mom and littermates. Puppies taken away from littermates prior to eight weeks miss out on this important lesson and must be taught bite inhibition (using their mouths softly). Human skin is much more sensitive than the fur-covered skin of mom and littermates, so even with youthful experience, it is up to humans to teach puppies how to use their mouths without causing harm.

The following are the steps you should take to insure that your puppy understands the importance of bite inhibition. These steps are intended for puppies up to 12 weeks of age, but can be used for older dogs who have never been taught bite inhibition.

***NOTE: Only adults or older children, who can follow instructions, should perform these steps.***

1. Allow the puppy to mouth and play-bite your hands. Say a loud "OUCH!" when the puppy puts slightly more pressure than usual.
2. Immediately stop playing for a few seconds.
3. Then again allow him to mouth and play.
4. Repeat the "Ouch!" and stop playing every time the puppy applies too much pressure.
5. If the puppy is not responding to the "Ouch," just stop playing and get up and move away for a minute, then start again.
6. The puppy will quickly learn that the fun ends when he mouths too hard.
7. Practice several times a day for 3-4 weeks before proceeding to Step 8.

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The puppy should now understand what a soft mouth means, which is a crucial skill as all dogs may bite at some point if stressed or hurt, so it's important they know how to bite softly. Now it's time to teach him not to mouth people at all.

8. Every time the puppy's teeth make contact with human skin, say "OUCH!"
9. Immediately stop playing and get up and leave.
10. Ignore the puppy for a minute or two.
11. Soon the puppy will start to believe that humans are very sensitive and any tooth contact is a no.
12. Remember that puppies do need to mouth and explore, so be sure to provide them with plenty of ways to safely teeth and chew. Safe chew toys such as a KONG or a hard plastic Nylabone are great ways to encourage your dog to chew. Redirect any inappropriate chewing to appropriate toys.
13. Avoid loose pants, flowing skirts, and loose shoe laces that will entice a dog to chase and bite. Teach children not to run around the puppy. Join a puppy playgroup so that the puppy can learn from other puppies how to play appropriately.
14. Most importantly, have fun!