

Puppy Mouthiness

Puppies and adult dogs use their mouths as a normal part of play and communication. Humans, however, do not play or communicate in this manner, so we need to teach our puppies the proper use of their mouths in human society.

1. Teach your puppy bite inhibition. Puppies that are not taught proper bite inhibition are the dogs that do damage to people or other dogs as adults. Teaching bite inhibition involves teaching the dog how to regulate jaw pressure. Start with the hardest bites that your puppy gives you. Use a sharp, high-pitched “yip” to startle the puppy (if the yip does not work, you can use a verbal correction like a low, abrupt “no” or ‘hey”). When the puppy startles, immediately redirect him to an appropriate chew toy and praise him for chewing on the correct item. When the puppy is not mouthing hard anymore, then move to the medium bites, then to the light bites, and then to no biting. Adults must help children since children make play sounds instead of startle sounds, so dogs often become mouthier. Treat your clothing like your skin and use the same method of startle and redirect. Teaching bite inhibition takes time, so be patient and consistent. Eventually, your puppy will learn that human skin is very sensitive.
2. Make sure that your puppy has plenty of appropriate chewing options. Remember, she is a puppy, and she does need to chew. Puppies also get bored easily, so variety is important. We recommend compressed/pressed rawhides, dental enzyme chews, rope toys (these can be soaked in chicken broth to make them more interesting), puzzle toys, and “KONG” toys. Any ingestible chewing items should be supervised so that your puppy does not try to swallow a large piece. If your dog has a habit of trying to swallow large pieces, take the chew away before it gets small enough for them to try. Stay away from hard bones and real bones. These items are too hard and puppies may fracture their teeth.
3. Avoid wrestling with your puppy because it will encourage the puppy to put his mouth on you. Instead, play games like fetch or teach your dog tricks. If your puppy consistently gets mouthy after a certain amount of play time, stop the play before he gets too excited to avoid him wanting to use his mouth inappropriately. **All interactions with puppies and children should be supervised to avoid either of them having a bad experience.**
4. If there are certain times during the day that your puppy tends to be mouthier, try to preempt those times by giving them something appropriate to chew on before they get into trouble. This way, we can avoid our puppies developing bad habits.
5. Bitter apple or other bad tasting sprays can be used on items that seem particularly interesting to your puppy (table legs, clothing, etc.)
6. Give your puppy enough exercise. Depending on the breed and personality of your dog, you may have quite a challenge. Field bred dogs and performance dogs often need to run off leash for a few hours each day. A walk around the block will not cut it for these dogs. If they do not get enough exercise, you will see an increase in inappropriate mouthing.

If you have any other questions regarding puppy biting, please feel free to give us a call!