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STRENGTHENING THE HUMAN – ANIMAL CONNECTION



How to Stop Mouthing and Biting in Pups

Mouthing and biting is normal puppy behavior. This is important to remember. This is how they interacted with their littermates and mother and it's how they investigate their world. One of the crucial things they learn from their littermates and mother is bite inhibition. If removed from the litter too soon they may not have had a chance to start learning about this. But, that said, mouthing on a furry puppy is quite different than mouthing on bare skin. Even gentle mouthing can hurt humans so it's best to teach puppy what is acceptable to mouth on INSTEAD of us.

This is a tip sheet to help you learn how to interact with your puppy so as not to encourage mouthing/biting and also how to stop a pup from mouthing/biting.

Instead of concentrating your efforts on “Stopping” mouthing behavior, you will be teaching your puppy what you DO want him to do Instead of the mouthing.

This simple training principle applies to other problem behaviors too – such as jumping, barking, etc.

You will be “marking” the desired behavior (In this case – no mouthing) with either a word such as “Good” or with a click from a clicker. If you are unfamiliar with clicker training, refer to Karen Pryor’s book, “Getting Started, Clicker Training for Your Dog.”

Tips:

- * Start with an environment of plenty – LOTS to chew on
- * Many puppies respond in a positive way to Dog Appeasing Pheromone so it can be helpful to have them wear a DAP collar for training, socializing, puppy classes, etc.
- * Teach sit as a default behavior (See Deference handout) – This teaches puppies to sit calmly for attention instead of jumping, biting, etc.
- * A couple of brisk walks to tire puppy out goes a long way to improving behavior.



- 🐾 Puzzle toys are a nice way to feed some of the pup's daily calorie requirement and give pup a good outlet for his mouthing.
- 🐾 Everyone that interacts with puppy should have a toy handy to give pup to chew.
- 🐾 Interrupting the mouthing with either a "Yipe!" or calling pup away from the person he's chewing on, "Pup, pup, PUPPY!" and then giving pup a toy. A word of caution: Some puppies can become more aroused by the "Yipe!" and want to bite more, or even frightened. For these pups, it can be more effective to remove your attention from the pup by standing up and withdrawing your hands (tucking hands into your arm pits is very helpful because human hands waving around entices puppies to bite them). Note: It is very important that you remove all attention from the pup – No talking; No eye contact. You can also step over a baby gate to prevent interactions with puppy until puppy is calm. Then, ALWAYS redirect to a toy. The method you choose depends on your pup.
- 🐾 Always consider "Prevention" first, when possible. If you know, for example, that puppy always bites your feet when you go up the stairs then design some training sessions around that. You'll focus on marking ("Good" or click from clicker) the desired behavior (NO biting feet). Say "Good" or click as you approach the stairs with no biting. Repeat several times. Then say "Good" or click as you go up the stairs with no biting. Keep marking the desired behavior and give treats all the way up the stairs. Repeat several times and repeat daily until biting has extinguished itself. Then periodically mark and treat to maintain the new good behavior.
- 🐾 It is also helpful to take puppy for a walk just before his "witching" hour hits. Pent up energy fuels bad behavior.
- 🐾 Absolutely no punishment – this can frighten the puppy, decrease his trust of you, and increase his arousal level.
- 🐾 Avoid using hands and feet to play with puppy.
- 🐾 Avoid rough play or handling that increases arousal.
- 🐾 Appropriate toys for chewing are those that cannot be chewed into smaller pieces and swallowed. Stuffed toys are fine if puppy doesn't shred and ingest them. It is fine to allow these types of toys with your supervision – choose durable varieties. I wouldn't leave pup alone in his crate with these types of toys. The following is a list of appropriate toys for chewing that can also be left in his crate with him while unattended.

 - Nyla-bones
 - Kong toys
 - Busy Buddy toys
 - Meals via puzzle toys

