



Bite Inhibition

Puppies use their mouths much like we humans use our hands: to investigate and communicate. One of the most important lessons your puppy needs to learn is he cannot bite people. Before you teach him to not bite at all, he first needs to learn bite inhibition (i.e., soft bite).

By teaching bite inhibition, you are teaching a preventive measure. Otherwise, if he should bite in the future, he might be more inclined to apply stronger teeth pressure because he never received feedback for those times when he mouthed as a puppy.

Luckily, he has already learned some bite inhibition from his littermates. When a puppy bites too hard in play, the playmate will yelp and fun will immediately end. The biter just learned that he cannot apply that amount of pressure with his jaws or good stuff ends. This same approach is going to be used.

Pick a word to use, such as Ouch. Do not use a long drawn out Noooooooooooo. The word needs to be a sound that is abrupt and sharp.

Start with saying Ouch at the hardest bites. For now ignore the medium and soft bites. When you yelp, look at your dog's reaction. Did he stop suddenly? Yeah! He gets a toy immediately. Make sure you have one close by. By giving him a toy, it redirects his mouthing to an object that is appropriate for his needle sharp teeth.

If he did not stop suddenly, play has just ended. Be a drama queen! Get up, turn your back to your puppy and walk out of the room. Do not be tempted to tell him No, Stop It, or any other verbal commands. After a few seconds of being away, get a toy and enter the room again. Offer him the toy to redirect his need to mouth. If you need to leave the room more than 3 times within a few minutes, stop playing altogether. It sounds like your puppy needs to burn off some excess energy or is super tired and needs a nap.

Never punish your puppy for biting you. Alpha rolling, clamping his mouth shut, etc. result in a

more aggressive or fearful puppy. These methods will teach your puppy to either bite harder to defend himself or fear you.

Once your puppy's bites are gentler for several days, yelp only at the medium bites. And gradually continue the process at softer bites until he is mouthing with no pressure. He is learning that humans are very sensitive creatures. Plus, playing with toys is much more fun than biting hands, ankles, etc. Let the mouthing continue for several weeks. You want your puppy to remember this is the pressure to apply if his mouth touches a human when he is an adult.

Now you are ready for the final step: teaching him not to bite at all. If your puppy mouths you, bring your arms close to your chest and remain still until he moves away. Then reward with a toy or treat. You may have to remain in place for several seconds. The important part is to remain still; movement is exciting to puppies.

It is highly recommended that you do not play any biting games with your puppy. This will only confuse him. If he can play bite you, then he thinks can play bite grandma, children or any other person.

Prohibiting your puppy from biting altogether without first teaching him bite inhibition may bring temporary relief; however, for the long term he may use too much pressure if he should bite as an adult. By giving him feedback along the way with teaching him bite inhibition, he is learning that if he ever mouths humans, to do so in a gentle manner. If you skip that initial step, later as an adult if he is ever provoked or scared and responds with a bite, his bite will most likely be quite painful and could cause serious injury.

By adolescence your puppy will have stronger jaws and bigger teeth, so it is crucial that he learns to eliminate biting humans prior 6 months of age. If he has not, please contact me for a personalized plan to help you achieve success.