

Puppy Biting

Puppy teeth are razor sharp and the teething stage is painful—for everyone. Puppies should have their adult teeth by 7 months; biting after 8 months is protest biting or a learned behavior. Research shows that a major contributor to excessive puppy biting is early adoption (before 8 weeks).

The Illinois Animal Control Act 605/2.2 states that the mother and her puppies must remain together until the age of 8 weeks. A puppy learns bite inhibition from his mother and littermates. If a pup bites too hard or is too bossy, the other pups will let him know very quickly. These lessons sound violent, but they are crucial for proper development. Although puppies learn restraint better from their peers, the hints below should help:

1. Redirection – offer proper toys to chew. No old socks or shoes. A puppy cannot tell the difference between new and old. Avoid items that are easily destroyed.
2. If your puppy bites while you are petting, quietly remove your attention from him. This has to be done many times before the pup realizes he is being ignored. Once he relaxes, pet him again, etcetera.
3. Use positive reinforcement (“good dog”) when your puppy chews the right toy and say “no”, when he selects the wrong object. Always offer the right option to reinforce what you want.
4. Use a chewing deterrent (Grannick’s Apple Bitter). First, give your pup a taste of it several times for a few days to create a negative association between the bad taste and the bad smell. Then spray it on your hands, furniture, or the leash to deter the biting.
5. No tug of war or slapping games.
6. When your puppy is in a rowdy, biting mood, use the crate for a “positive” time out.
7. Set up a play date with other puppies.
8. Teach your puppy how to accept touch (brushing, nail trim, teeth brushing).
9. When your puppy bites, scream "OW!" in a high-pitched voice. Then ignore him.
10. If your puppy doesn't get the message, use a leash correction or a little scruff and scold him in a low-toned voice (sound evil). Never grab, strike, or pinch his nose as this will make your puppy not trust hands.

Puppies that won't stop or get wilder after a correction have a strong defense response and will continue to snap or snarl. The “scruff and cuff” and “restraint” methods work for this type of dog, BUT proper timing and delivery are vital for these exercises. It is important to remain calm and quiet while working with this type of puppy. Poor training will make the problem worse and you may be bit.

Consult a professional before attempting any method that is unknown to you. Once a dog is over a year, he should not be mouthy or biting. Don't make excuses for your biter, get help.