

# Yikes! My Puppy Bites!

Biting is normal puppy behavior. It's instinctual, and they have done this with their littermates before coming into your home. Puppies explore the world with their mouths. It's normal for other dogs to tell them how hard is too hard.

**Now it's up to you!**

## Safe Mouth Training

It is normal for puppies to nip like little sharks – this sometimes earns them the nickname “jaws on paws”. Yelp “Yikes” when your puppy gives you one of his *hardest* bites, then direct him towards a chew toy to sink his teeth into.

Responding properly to puppy nipping is very important. Yelping lets the puppy know that the bite hurts, and teaches him to bite more softly. This feedback, combined with similar feedback from other dogs helps your puppy to develop an “inhibited bite”.

Bite inhibition allows an adult dog to bite with minimal or no damage, and is *essential* for a safe pet. When your puppy no longer bites hard, then use the same training technique for his medium, and then even for his soft bites – until he only mouths you *verrry* gently.

Some puppies get excited when they hear a yelp – instead of easing off they bite again even harder. If your puppy does this then he needs a brief time-out after you yelp. You can use his crate or a puppy proof room for a time-out. Any boring place where he is left alone for a couple of minutes will do the job of teaching him that when he bites too hard he loses his friends.

Do not forget to direct him towards an attractive chew toy when his time-out is done.

## TIPS

Say, “Ouch! That Hurt!”

Withdraw Attention

Teach “Leave It!”

Teach “Settle”

Reward Calm Behavior

Bite Inhibition can be taught only up to the age of 18 weeks. After this, it is not physically possible for a puppy to learn this technique.

## It's important to teach puppies that human flesh is off limits. There are many ways of doing this:

1. Ask a trainer about Bite Inhibition Training.
2. Provide sufficient exercise (mental & physical) to release excess energy. This gives you better opportunities to reward good behavior.
3. Reward alternative behaviors by teaching that calm behavior gets more attention. Reward with praise and petting when chewing on an appropriate item.
4. Be Prepared and Redirect with an exciting toy. You should have plenty of chew toys that are rotated out to avoid boredom.
5. Avoid games that encourage nipping like rough housing.
6. Shun – like a littermate – ouch, you're no fun, goodbye!
7. Time-outs. If done properly, this works well. Put puppy in his crate to settle down. Don't use it as a punishment with anger, but give a chew toy, and you both can take a little breather. If puppy is over stimulated, this is a good time for him to learn he needs to calm down before he is accepted back into the pack.
8. Teach the command, "Settle" during his calm moments. When calm and tired, pet your puppy with soft strokes, and in a relaxing voice say, "Settle" so he learns that meaning.
9. Deterrents such as bitter apple, pickle juice, breath freshener, or the essential oil Clove oil – things that may smell good to humans but dogs hate.

## Points to Remember:

- You MUST react EVERY time you feel the puppy's teeth at an inappropriate level (too hard a bite).
- If the touch is unexpected, use "Ouch!"
- ALWAYS supervise children when they are with the pup (or any dog).
- Do not play "rough house" games with the pup and do not let anyone else play this way with the pup.
- Do not let other people "discipline" your pup. If you think someone may do this, remove the pup from the area.

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Stay calm and keep in mind the more you get angry and frustrated, the more confusing it is to your puppy. Be consistent with teaching puppy the rules and he'll learn. It takes time, repetition, and patience.

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*Any pup or dog can bite if given the right circumstances; it may be due to the dog misunderstanding human actions and/or humans misunderstanding dog behavior.*