

---

# PUPPY MOUTHING/BITING

---

Puppy mouthing is a normal part of puppy behavior and does not mean that your puppy will develop into an aggressive dog. Puppies learn how to control the pressure of their bite from playing with their littermates. When they bite one of the other puppies too hard, the other puppy lets out a yelp and will stop play. The biting puppy has learnt that if they want to continue playing with the other puppy, they must be softer with their mouth.

Puppies will begin to play-mouth and bite soon after they are brought into a new home. This is the natural extension of their play with their littermates, and it is your job as pet parent to teach them that this is not an acceptable way to interact with humans.

## Problem Solving

### *What to do:*

**Redirection** – Transfer your puppy’s attention to appropriate chew toys instead. Appropriate chew toys may include durable rubber toys, food storage toy or durable plush toys.

**Withdraw Attention** – As soon as you feel your puppies’ teeth, calmly and quietly stand up and turn away your puppy. If your puppy is persisting, then walk away or even leave the room. Interaction can resume once your puppy has calmed down – *5-10 seconds is usually enough time for a puppy to settle.*

### *What not to do:*

- Using reprimands to punish your puppy for biting does not teach your puppy how to interact appropriately but will create distrust and damage the human – animal bond.
- Avoid “yelping” or verbally acknowledging the biting. Vocalization may increase your puppy’s excitement and inadvertently reinforce the behavior or could induce a fear of social interaction.

These methods should improve your puppy’s bite inhibition, especially if the whole household uses them consistently.

### *Prevention and Management:*

- Provide your puppy with some appropriate toys to chew on.
- Avoid encouraging your puppy to mouth your hands, clothes, or shoes.
- Confine your puppy when you are unable to prevent play biting.
- Always supervise your puppy around children and visitors.

Puppies that are overly excited are more likely to mouth and bite. Examples of situations when puppies can become overly excited include:

- When children are running around
- When your puppy is released from its crate or secure area
- When the family returns home after work or school

**Be proactive** – Recognize the times when your puppy may become excited and give the chew-toy before they bite.