



## Bite Inhibition

From a young age puppies have learned that our hands are fun! We feed them with our hands, we touch them with our hands, and we play with them with our hands. Playing with your puppy is not only a great bonding experience and exercise but it is a perfect time for training your pup to touch / bite human skin appropriately. When teaching bite inhibition, you first must remember that scolding a pup for every single bite is counter productive and will only make the biting worse.

Lets start by talking about what a mother dog would do to her puppies if they nipped her too hard. She would start by making a loud YELP! The puppies learn by a young age what this means. It means “OUCH! That was too hard!” You can also notice other dogs making that noise to each other if they get too rough during play. If the puppy kept nipping mom she would then do a low GROWL. This simply says “I mean it. Knock it off!”.

So all you need to do is do what mom would have done! Puppies have learned this type of communication since they were a day old, this is why it works! So, let’s put the behavior on a scale from 1-5 – 1 being a nibble or gumming of your hand that really does not bother you and 5 being a bite that makes you want to give your puppy up for adoption ☺

To start, focus on the #5 bites ( over time we will gradually decrease the number that we “ouch” for, this will cause your dog to slowly learn what bites are not allowed!) every time it happens say, “OUCH”, in a loud high voice. Stop play temporarily (about 10-30 seconds) and stand up, with hands behind your back and turn away from your pup. Return to playing but each time your pup bites HARD say OUCH!” and remove yourself, the toy, your attention and everything the puppy likes. If you are consistent, your pup will learn very quickly that you will not play and the fun stuff ends if they bite hard. There is nothing more rewarding than attention from you and they want it. Remember to target just the HARDEST BITE, NOT every single bite...We are teaching them how to play. Dogs play with their mouths naturally and it is important to let them.

Do avoid playing solely with your hands, try using a toy. We do not want to teach them to nip at our hands. Make sure everyone in the household is on the same page! Also avoid pushing them away with your hands; you will notice that it becomes nothing but a game!

### **Ouch the softer bites**

After a few days or a week (depending on the dog) you should be able to tell that the bites have changed and are now softer. If so then its time to target (or correct) the medium bites (#4 bites) in the same way. Use the same approach as above and your puppy should begin to avoid the medium or #4 bites, resorting to softer ones.

Next, if those bites are fine for you but, still a bit too hard for kids, then its time to continue with the medium to soft (#3) bites. Again, take the same approach as above and continue to remove all the fun, attention and play from the game if there is a bite that is inappropriate. Be sure to use a toy and reward by CONTINUING to play if the bites are “inhibited.”

## **Are Timeouts OK?**

Yes, timeouts are fine, but only if done properly! If your puppy gets TOO crazy and cannot focus on anything but play, it is fine to use the crate as a timeout. Since the crate is their safe spot to relax, that is exactly what it will do. ONLY keep him/her in the crate for a limited time (3-5 minutes). Anything past 5 minutes will be pointless and can become punishment. They will not remember why they are in there! Remember, we want to keep their crate a positive space. Timeouts are simply just to relax them not punish them.

## **Rough play with children**

There are four simple rules to start when dealing with a puppy that plays rough with kids

1. Supervise all play sessions
2. Leave the leash on for control
3. Teach your kids to call out for a parent when things get rough
4. Always use and play with toys, not just hands

Overall puppies treat small kids like littermates. Learning how rough is too rough for your kids is done the same way as above but remember, kids don't react as quickly as we do and they need help. Parents should supervise all play sessions and all times the puppy and kids are together. Later as the puppy gets better you can leave the room and go about your day but in the beginning you and your family, including the puppy are "IN TRAINING" and a parent needs to be there to help all go smoothly.

Use the leash, as it will give you a great way to control, without touch and keep your pup from chasing down a child or grabbing pant legs. Simply stand on the leash, prevent the pup from following and count to 10-20, Time out! Let the puppy go and repeat the "confinement" a few times. If it does not work, the pup can go into his crate for about 5-10 minutes.