

How to Stop Puppy Biting and Train Bite Inhibition

AKC Staff

Puppies who learn bite inhibition are less likely to grow into adult dogs who bite.

Offering [puppy chew toys](#) can help teach your puppy what is acceptable to bite or chew on.

Sometimes, it's a good idea to gently put your puppy in their crate to calm them down.

Puppies' mouths are filled with about 28 teeny-tiny razors that seem to be attracted to your fingers or toes. Dog trainers call it "play biting," but it's irksome and often painful when your cuddly pup seems to be all teeth. However, this is completely normal for [puppy teething](#) and necessary for development, and something you can train away with a few simple steps.

Teach your puppy bite inhibition

Learning how to moderate the force of a bite is very important for all dogs. There may come a time when they're in pain or fearful, and they put their mouth on you or someone else. But if they've learned bite inhibition, they understand that they shouldn't bite down hard. Puppies naturally nip at each other while playing. If they bite too hard on their mother or littermate, the other dog will likely make a loud yelp sound, warning the puppy, "Hey, that hurt!"

Depending on the dog, you can teach this, as well, by making a high-pitched "ow!" sound if they bite you. Beware though, because, for some puppies, this actually gets them even more worked up and likely to bite. In this case, it is better to turn quietly around, walk away, or gently put the pup into their crate for a few minutes to calm down. If they do back off, be sure to [reward your dog with a treat](#) and some verbal praise.

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Some dog owners use a [bitter spray](#) to deter puppies from chewing and biting on objects.

Teach your puppy that biting means "game over"

If your puppy bites you while playing, that means playtime is over, with no exceptions. Yelling at or physically punishing your puppy, as strange as it sounds, is also a type of reward. It teaches them that biting gets some kind of response from you, which is known as positive punishment. This can also

make them fearful of being handled. Instead, teach them that biting will get them nothing. Kathy Santo, dog trainer and columnist for *AKC Family Dog*, suggests turning around and tucking your hands into your armpits.

“It’s actually a calming signal and a minor form of attention withdrawal,” she says. “And be careful not to roughhouse with your young pup in ways that only encourage them to lose control and bite you.”

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Give your puppy an alternative item to chew

It’s a good idea to keep a [puppy chew toy](#) at hand at all times, so you can anticipate biting behavior and substitute the toy for your hand or furniture. Doing so will let pups know what is OK to bite or chew. If they start nibbling at your fingers or toes while you’re playing, offer a toy instead.

Again, if they continue to nip, stop the play session immediately. If you’ve been training your puppy to sit, you might also redirect them by asking them to sit and rewarding with a toy.

Prevent the pounce

If your puppy is pouncing on your legs or feet as you walk, a common playful puppy behavior, Santo recommends holding a [high-value treat](#) next to your leg as you walk, to help the puppy learn to walk nicely alongside you. This same tactic is used when [teaching a puppy to walk on a leash](#).

Put them in a time-out

Gently put your puppy in [their crate](#) to give them a chance to calm down and prevent them from biting. It’s very important to make sure that they don’t learn to associate the [crate](#) with punishment, so be calm. Once the pup calms down, you can let them out.

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Offer quiet time or a potty break

Sometimes a biting puppy is really an over-tired puppy, and they need to be put in a quiet space or crate to take a nap. Other times, they may need a potty break, or may just be hungry or thirsty.

Help use up some energy

When the puppy keeps biting, even after you [substitute a toy several times](#), he may just need to burn up some physical or mental energy. Take them in the yard and watch them run around.

Reinforce behaviors you desire

We sometimes forget that when our puppy is calm and quiet, we should reinforce that with a “good dog” or a piece of kibble or a pat. You’ll help them learn what behaviors you’re looking for through [positive reinforcement](#).

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Never hit your dog

Never, ever hit or otherwise physically punish your dog. If your pet seems to be [biting out of aggression](#), speak to a veterinarian or dog trainer about ways to manage that behavior.

Enroll in a puppy class

An [AKC S.T.A.R. Puppy](#) class or another well-run local class will provide your puppy with the chance to socialize with other dogs.

Teaching your little manic play biter to be polite with their mouth may seem like a huge challenge at first. Patience and consistency are the keys. Some puppies may back off during one play session, and come at you teeth first in the next.

“Play biting does not mean your puppy is vicious,” says Dr. Jerry Klein, AKC’s chief veterinary officer. “However, if you haven’t been able to moderate the behavior by the time they’re six months old, it’s a good idea to consult an experienced [dog trainer](#) or animal behavior specialist.”

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