

Expert Tips to Curb Puppy Mouthing

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[AKC GoodDog! Helpline](#) (GDH) is our telephone and video dog training consultation service. We offer live, personalized assistance with your questions about [training your puppy](#) or [dog](#). To celebrate GDH's 10th anniversary in 2023, we've rounded up the most common questions that our dog trainers hear from owners just like you. A common question is, "How do I stop my puppy from mouthing me?"

Puppies explore the world with their mouths, so it's completely [natural for puppies to mouth your hands](#), feet, and anything else they can get between their teeth. Mouthing and play-biting are also normal parts of [puppy play](#). Plus, [teething](#) (which can last for up to six months) is painful, and [mouthing things](#) helps to relieve the pain.

But those razor-sharp puppy teeth hurt, and you don't want your dog to continue mouthing you into adulthood. An important step for any new puppy owner is teaching your puppy not to mouth humans. It takes patience and consistency, but there are ways to make it easier for both of you!

These 10 tips will help stop your puppy from mouthing you, so you can both spend more time learning the fun stuff.

1. When They're Mouthing, Stop All Play and Movement

Attention of any kind is a strong reward, but it's important not to reward your puppy for mouthing or play-biting. Whenever your puppy bites or mouths you, stop all interaction with them. That will teach your puppy that mouthing or biting stops the fun. You can even tuck your hands away and turn your back to your puppy for a few seconds to really emphasize the lesson.

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To help teach bite inhibition (the use of a gentle mouth), say "ouch!" or "yip" in a high-pitched voice whenever your puppy bites you. This mimics the behavior their mother and littermates used when the puppy bit too hard, and it will help them understand the importance of a gentle mouth. However, this noise can overexcite some pups, so if it doesn't settle your puppy down, walk away or calmly place them in [their crate](#) instead.

2. Minimize Jerky Movements While Practicing Calm Handling

Waving hands, running feet, and other sudden, jerky movements will encourage your puppy to play bite. That's because these types of actions tap into your puppy's [instinct to chase](#) and [capture prey](#). It wouldn't be fair to rile up the puppy, then get upset when they mouth or bite as a natural response.

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Instead, set up your puppy for success by using calm, smooth movements. When you [handle your puppy](#) (for example, when you are grooming or petting them), do so gently and slowly.

3. Avoid Playing in a Way That Triggers Reflexive Biting

When you play with your pup, it's tempting to wrestle and gently push them about. After all, it's how they [play with other dogs](#), and many puppies love that kind of interaction.

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But if you roughhouse with your new pet, you might encourage them to play-bite and mouth you. They won't understand where to draw the line, and you could end up looking like a pin cushion. Instead, try to find [ways to play with your puppy](#) that don't trigger those instincts.

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4. Engage in Noncontact Play

There are all kinds of [exciting games you can play with your puppy](#) that will keep their teeth away from your skin. For example, [teaching your dog to play fetch](#) is a great way to bond, [provide exercise](#) and have fun. You can also [train your puppy to drop](#) the [ball](#) so you don't have to remove it from their mouth or chase them to get it back.

[Tug-of-war](#) is another game that allows you to interact with your puppy while keeping their mouth at arm's length. It's a wonderful way to teach the cues for "take it" and "drop it." It also encourages [impulse control](#) and makes a perfect [training reward](#) in place of [treats](#).

5. Play With Large Toys Away From Your Body