

bite¹ S2

/baɪt/

verb (*past tense* **bit** /bɪt/, *past participle* **bitten** /'bɪtn/, *present participle* **biting**)

1 WITH YOUR TEETH **teeth** [intransitive and transitive] **BITE** to use your teeth to cut, crush, or chew something:

The dog bit him and made his hand bleed.

bite into/through/at/down

She bit into a croissant and took a sip of coffee.

An adult conger eel can easily bite through a man's leg.

*Nina pushed her fist into her mouth and **bit** down **hard**.*

bite something off

a man whose arm was bitten off by an alligator

bite your nails (= bite the nails on your fingers, especially because you are nervous)

I wish I could stop biting my nails.

bite your lip (= because you are upset or not sure what to say)

She paused uncertainly, biting her lip.

2 INSECT/SNAKE **insect/snake** [intransitive and transitive] to injure someone by making a hole in their skin → **sting**:

I think I've been bitten.

The dog's been badly bitten by fleas.

3 NOT SLIP **press hard** [intransitive] **HOLDSTICK** if an object bites into a surface, it presses firmly into it and does not move or slip:

bite into

The hooves of the galloping horses had bitten deep into the soft earth.

He wore boots that bit into the ice.

- 4** HAVE AN EFFECT/EFFECT/INFLUENCE **effect** [intransitive] to start to have an unpleasant effect:

The new tobacco taxes have begun to bite.

bite into

The recession is biting into the music industry.

- 5** **accept** [intransitive] to believe what someone tells you, or to buy something they are selling, especially when they have persuaded you to do this:

The new camcorders were withdrawn after consumers failed to bite.

- 6** **fish** [intransitive] if a fish bites, it takes food from a hook and so gets caught:

The fish just aren't biting today.

- 7** **bite your tongue** SAY

to stop yourself from saying what you really think, even though this is difficult:

She should have bitten her tongue.

- 8** **bite the dust** (informal)

to die, fail, or be defeated:

Italy's championship hopes eventually bit the dust.

- 9** **bite the bullet** (informal) ACCEPT

to start dealing with an unpleasant or dangerous situation because you cannot avoid it any longer:

I finally bit the bullet and left.

- 10** **bite off more than you can chew** MORE THAN SOMETHING OR SOMEBODY ELSE
to try to do more than you are able to do

- 11** **he/she won't bite** (spoken) FRIGHTENED

used to say that there is no need to be afraid of someone, especially someone in authority:

Well, go and ask him – he won't bite!

12 what's biting you/her etc? (spoken) UPSET

used to ask why someone is annoyed or upset

13 somebody/something bites (spoken) (not polite)

used to say that you dislike someone or something very much or think that something is very bad

14 once bitten, twice shy

used to say that if you have failed or been hurt once, you will be more careful next time

15 bite the hand that feeds you HARM/BE BAD FOR

to harm someone who has helped or supported you

16 be bitten by the showbiz/travel/flying etc bug INTERESTED

to develop a very strong interest in something

→ **bite somebody's head off** AT HEAD¹ (33) ,

→ NAIL-BITING

THESAURUS

bite to use your teeth to cut, crush, or chew something: *The dog bit me! | I sometimes bite my fingernails when I'm nervous. | He bit into the apple.*

chew to keep biting something that is in your mouth: *Helen was chewing a piece of gum. | He was chewing on a cigar.*

gnaw if an animal gnaws something, it bites it repeatedly: *The dog was in the yard gnawing on a bone.*

nip somebody/ give somebody a nip to give someone or something a small sharp bite: *When I took the hamster out of his cage, he nipped me.*

nibble to take a lot of small bites from something: *A fish nibbled at the bait. | She sat at her desk, nibbling her sandwich.*

sink your teeth into somebody/ something to

bite someone or something with a lot of force, so that your teeth go right into them: *The dog sank its teeth into my leg.* | *He sank his teeth into the steak.*

chomp on something (informal) to bite something and chew it in a noisy way: *The donkey was chomping on a carrot.* | *He was chomping away on big slice of toast.*

sting if an insect stings you, it makes a very small hole in your skin. You use **sting** about bees, wasps, and scorpions, and **bite** about mosquitoes, ants, spiders, and snakes: *She stepped on a wasps' nest and must have been stung at least 20 times.*

bite back

phrasal verb

1 SAY **bite something ↔ back**

to stop yourself from saying or showing what you really think:

Tamar bit back the retort that sprang to her lips.

2 REVENGE to react strongly and angrily to something:

bite back at

Determined to bite back at car thieves, he wired his car to an electric fence.

Word origin

Language: Old English

Origin: *bitan*