

HOW TO TACKLE PUPPY BITING



Just like babies, puppies use their mouths to explore and interact with the world around them. While mouthing (sometimes more accurately called puppy biting) is normal for puppies and may seem harmless while your pup is young, it's wise to remember that adult dogs who bite aren't quite so fun! For this reason it's important to help your puppy learn when and how hard to use their teeth.

Why do puppies bite?

Play biting stems from the dog's ancestry as social carnivores. Wolves and wild dogs are equipped with strong jaws in order to hunt large prey animals. In social situations, there will be arguments over resources and it's important that dogs use inhibited jaw strength to communicate, rather than injuring members of their social group.

The ability to bite without maiming force is rehearsed in puppyhood. When one puppy bites another too hard with those needle-sharp teeth, play grinds temporarily to a halt, which provides a potent consequence to the biting puppy. Over time, the bites become consistently more gentle, in order to keep play going. Without this constant feedback about their jaw pressure, puppies are at higher risk of growing up without acquiring the capacity to inhibit the force of their jaws.

What should you do about puppy biting?

The best policy for owners of baby puppies is to allow play-biting with the adults in the house, provided it is not too hard. If your puppy bites too hard, quietly end the interaction for a few seconds.

Puppy play

Provide plenty of opportunities for your puppy to play with other puppies. Our Baby Puppy Course provides a safe, fun environment where puppies can learn and make new friends under the supervision of experienced trainers.

Be proactive

Make sure to provide an assortment of toys and chews so that your puppy has lots of appropriate options to choose from. The teething process for dogs occurs much faster and can be much more intense than human teething.

Chewing provides pups with some relief from the pain of new teeth breaking through. It's a good idea to keep a toy within arm's reach so that you can easily redirect biting behaviour to a more appropriate item.

Learn your puppy's cues

Just like baby humans, baby puppies can become easily overtired which can cause mouthing behaviours to escalate. You can help to soothe your puppy to sleep by providing something to chew on or to lick at in a calm, quiet space such as a puppy pen or crate.

Remain calm

When dealing with puppy biting, remember to stay calm. Shouting or screaming is likely to increase your puppy's arousal further and can turn biting into a game.