



INSTITUTE OF MODERN DOG TRAINERS



Ouch! That hurts!

Puppy Biting.

A guide to what's normal and
what's not!

NEW FOREST 000
Dog Training 
ACADEMY



Ouch that really does hurt!

PUPPY BITING IS MOST COMMON UNDESIRABLE PUPPY BEHAVIOUR!

One of the most common behavioural challenges faced with puppies is nipping! There is so much information available on the world wide web that is conflicting and could potentially make the issue worse.

First of all, in the vast majority of cases, puppy biting and mouthing is EXTREMELY normal, for so many reasons.

You may not believe me at the moment, as you probably reading this to help save your sanity and tame your shark! But it will end.....

This guide will help explain the reasons why it occurs and techniques used to help stop the behaviour



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Puppies explore the world with their mouths

•
They go through an uncomfortable teething process
that lasts 2-3 months.- Your puppy will end up with 42 adult teeth
– all erupting at different times..

•
They play hard with their siblings – often using
their teeth to (successfully) instigate play and attention

•
Herding breeds are predisposed to nip, herd and
chase fast moving things! Young children often get the brunt of
this behaviour and it really does hurt!

•
Retrievers are predisposed to picking up and holding
anything and everything within reach! Including your hands and
arms!



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A word on what to avoid

Above all else, avoid physical punishment when it comes to puppy biting (and for all other training issues!)

•

Don't follow (what people may consider as well-meaning advice!) the "common" but terrible advice, from squeezing your puppy's mouth shut, to pinning them on their backs, smacking on the muzzle to try and stop the biting.

•

Your puppy is NOT being "dominant" and you do not need to physically punish them to stop this behaviour.

•

Using such methods can result in causing other more serious behavioural issues, such as fear and aggression due to the punishment.



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What should you do instead?

Sleep, sleep and more sleep! An over aroused puppy is a bitey puppy! Puppies need a lot of sleep! Making sure that they have enough rest and battery recharge time is so important. Tick this off the list.

• Create fair and consistent boundaries for unwanted behaviour within the home –Making sure the entire family is aware of what is fair and consistence, having to many variations makes it really confusing for puppies! (and this is the same for all puppy behaviours and not just nipping)



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Puppies learn via **CONSEQUENCES** to a behaviour -
What is the outcome of the behaviour for the puppy -
If the consequence of a behaviour is good in the eyes of
the puppy then the behaviour is likely to be repeated. If
the consequence of the behaviour is removing / stopping
the fun/ good things then the behaviour will likely be
reduced.



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If your puppy bites you, you need to ignore the behaviour and remove “yourself” from the interaction without any drama, no need to say anything or do anything.

This means to your puppy the fun is over, the play has ended and more importantly the attention is over.

If your behaviour is too hard for you to ignore then go behind a door or baby gate where your puppy does not have access to continue nipping at you.

If your puppy tries to nip at you when you return, remove yourself again- It may seem a really repetitive process but a really important lesson to learn. When your puppy offers appropriate interaction (no nipping) you stay. Any nipping and you go away..

You should begin to see a major decrease in the intensity of biting as well as the amount of biting attempts within a few days.



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Make sure that you give your puppy attention and praise when they are behaving nicely!

Why does this work?

It's all in the science of behaviour and learning

- A behaviour that doesn't get reinforced will stop.

Your puppy will learn that we don't react to biting with play, attention or even a negative reaction. All these things can be so much fun for a puppy.

Your puppy will begin to learn self-entertainment. Once they realise the nipping isn't working, they will try will eventually redirect themselves onto something else.

Your puppy will consider other ways to seek out appropriate ways to get your attention, like offering a "sit" or laying at your feet.



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Other considerations

- It is really important to have a management place for your puppy, such as a play pen. It gives you a break from your puppy and is a calm place for your puppy to settle down if he gets too excited.
- Consider your puppy's preference for permissible items to chew! (non-human items – so no slippers or shoes, this will end in disaster!) Think about the texture, some puppies like soft latex toys to mouth, others like plush toys or rubbery toys (often a hard chew toy is not the same!) Consider items for your puppy to chew or lick- such as Kong toys or lick mats to help keep them entertained.
- Things that we may think are punishing, like pushing your puppy away, yelling at him etc, can be considered fun behaviours for your puppy and can encourage biting.



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When should you be concerned about biting in puppies?

- If growling, snapping, or biting when a person comes near to a resource (food, toy, furniture etc)
- Stiffens and stares at a person before biting
- Is consistently biting and breaking skin
- Barks, growls, or nips (not in play) at new people entering the home
- Snaps or growls at children



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Kennel Club Good Citizen Puppy Foundation Award,
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2, Island View

Manchester Road

Sway

Lymington

01590 682183

07788 413503

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