

# PUPPY BITING AND PREVENTION

Let's begin by understanding that puppies use their mouth to explore and learn about their environment. When playing with other puppies in their litter, mouthing is part of play, and when they get too rough with their littermates, they communicate by vocalizing and/or biting back. Appropriate play toys, consistency from humans, and socialization with other puppies is very important to help teach your puppy appropriate ways to use their mouths.

**HAVE A SELECTION OF APPROPRIATE TOYS:** Puppies go through stages of teething and should have [appropriate toys](#) to chew on to help with this stage of their life; however, one rule I like to follow regarding chew toys and anything else you may want to give your dog to chew such as rawhides or bones: *If it is too hard to hit on your knee, it is too hard to put in your dog's mouth.* Rotate your puppy's chew toys every 3-4 days because many dogs can lose interest if they are playing with the same toys.

The most common durable toys are [West Paw](#) and [Kong toys](#). These are rubber toys that are very durable that you can fill with your dog's kibble or other tasty treats and allow them to chew on without causing damage to their teeth. [Click here](#) for Kong Stuffing Ideas.

## WHAT TO DO WHEN YOUR PUPPY BITES YOU



**REMOVE YOUR ATTENTION.** If your puppy begins biting you. Stand up, look away and ignore your puppy for 2-3 seconds. Do not say anything to your puppy. This is called negative punishment; we want to remove your attention to decrease the biting behaviour.



**REDIRECT YOUR PUPPY.** Redirect them to a toy they are allowed to chew on instead. Having these toys set up in areas of the home where excitement is most prevalent is great prevention. For example, have a basket at the front door or near your dog's kennel where excitement and biting is most likely to occur.



**ENSURE YOUR PUPPY HAS APPROPRIATE OUTLETS FOR PLAY.** Tug is a great game to play with your pup. Using two tug toys of the same value works best. Tug with one toy and then after a few seconds of tug, release the toy and allow your puppy to have it, then begin moving the second tug toy in your hand to entice your puppy to drop the one they are playing with and tug with the other one in your hand. Then go pick up the one they have dropped and repeat! Going back and forth playing tug like this not only prevents your puppy from redirecting their energy and excitement onto you, but also allows them to learn to drop items and this behaviour is reinforced by playing with you. Using long rope like toys can also prevent your puppy from accidentally biting your hands while playing. [Here's an example of a puppy playtime session.](#)



**PREDICTABLE HUMAN INTERACTIONS** are very important. Asking your puppy to "sit" or "touch" prior to starting a play session can help your puppy succeed and understand what behaviours are positively reinforced when interacting with you.

**IT IS NOT RECOMMENDED** to play with your puppy with your hands. This sets your puppy up to fail and can lead to conflicting messages if they are punished for biting when you have initiated play by using your hands. If you feel you are struggling with your puppy's biting please contact your puppy class trainer for additional help.