


PUPPY BITING AND PREVENTION

Let's begin with the fact 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! When a puppy gets too rough with their littermates, the others 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 mouth.


HAVE A SELECTION OF APPROPRIATE TOYS: Chewing is a natural behaviour for dogs during all life stages. On top of it being a natural exploratory behaviour, puppies also go through stages of teething and should have [appropriate toys](#) to chew on to help with this. One rule 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 your knee with, it is too hard to put in your dog's mouth. Rotate your puppy's chew toys every 3-4 days to prevent your dog from losing interest in the same old toy.

The most common durable toys are [West Paw](#) and [Kong toys](#). These are rubber toys 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




PAUSE, TAKE A BREATH, & REDIRECT. If your puppy starts biting, we recommend that you pause for a moment and take a breath. Puppy biting can be frustrating and can even be painful, so it is important to remain calm and find a toy to re-direct the puppy's attention to. You could also reinforce your puppy for any behaviour other than biting. "Four feet on the floor" is a great place to start.




REDIRECT YOUR PUPPY. Unlike simply ignoring the behaviour, redirection prevents your puppy from getting frustrated and encourages a positive alternative behaviour. Having toys and treat stations set up in areas of the home where excitement is most prevalent is great prevention. For example, have a basket of toys at the front door where excitement and biting are most likely to occur.

TAKE A BREAK. If re-direction is not working, luring your puppy, or calmly picking them up and placing them into a confinement space with an enrichment opportunity and a resting place, can allow the puppy to sleep if needed, enjoy an independent activity, and give guardians a break.



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, reinforced by positive playtime with you. Using long rope-like toys can 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. Your puppy will thrive when they understand that they can affect their environment in a positive way! Reinforcing desirable behaviour, such as "four feet on the ground" and "touch" during interactions and ensuring relationships are safe, kind, and positive will help with your puppy's biting behaviour.

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.