

PUPPY BITING, NIPPING & ROUGH PLAY

Mouthing and biting are normal and natural behaviors for a puppy. You will need to show your puppy what she can mouth and bite (i.e. her toys, bones, etc.) and you also need ensure that she has bite inhibition. Bite inhibition means your puppy uses her mouth softly & without pressure when interacting with people. In other words, when your puppy bites, mouths or nips you - it shouldn't hurt you and it shouldn't break your skin or make you bleed.

Ideally, your puppy will learn her bite inhibition while she is still with her mom and littermates. If she is nursing and bites too hard, mom will get up and walk away and she won't get fed. Likewise, if she is playing with her littermates and bites too hard, her siblings may yelp or squeal and won't want to play anymore.

If you find yourself with a puppy who tends to bite down harder than she should, use the four R's to teach her bite inhibition - Remove, Redirect, Reinforce and Repeat.

- Remove - When your puppy bites on you too hard say, "Ouch" in calm voice and walk away from her. Count to 10 and return. If she continues to bite on you as you walk away, put yourself behind a baby gate or exercise pen and re-engage with her when she is calmer.
- Redirect - Redirect your puppy's mouth away from your hands by using dog-safe toys to play with her.
- Reinforce - Remember to always reinforce your puppy when she uses her mouth appropriately and without pressure. Say, "Yes" and give her a tiny bit of treat like cheese or lunch meat.
- Repeat - Dogs, like people, learn through repetition. You must say, "Ouch" and walk away from her each time she bites too hard. If you are consistent, she will quickly learn that when she bites too hard the good thing (i.e. you) goes away. Remember to also reward her each time she uses her mouth appropriately.

