

Puppy Bite Inhibition

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If you watch a litter of puppies playing, you'll notice that they spend much of their time biting and mouthing each other. Because your pup has very sharp teeth (but a weak jaw), his harder bites or mouthing hurt his littermates - this causes them to yelp and refuse to play with him for a few minutes. Very quickly, the pup learns that his pals won't play with him when he bites too hard.

You and your children should mimic this puppy play behavior in daily life. Because an adult dog has duller teeth but a very powerful jaw, Bite Inhibition (a "soft mouth") is one of the most important lessons your pup can learn while his sharp baby teeth are still in. It teaches your dog that if and when he is ever provoked to bite someone in the future, he should use a soft mouth with humans. This will prevent the possibility of him breaking human skin and getting you sued.

There are two steps to training Bite Inhibition. Step 1 is the crucial part so don't skip it!

Step 1: Practice several times daily for 3-4 weeks. (Best for pups up to 12 weeks of age but if you've never done bite inhibition exercises, this step can be used for older pups who have varied mouthing pressure) Allow pup to mouth/playbite. When he exerts slightly more pressure than usual, say "Ouch!" just loud enough that he stops in surprise, and immediately stop playing for a few seconds.

Now allow him to mouth again and repeat the "Ouch!" and stop playing steps several times until he ONLY mouths softly. If your pup is not responding to the "Ouch!", simply skip it and just stop playing and/or get up and move away for a minute, then start again. The point is to teach your pup that interaction with humans ends when he mouths too hard.

Step 2: (Only after Step 1 has been completed) Now, any and every time his teeth make contact with human skin, say "OUCH!" and immediately stop playing. Get up and leave, and/or ignore the pup for a minute or two. Your pup should now start to believe that humans are very sensitive and cannot stand the incredible pain of any tooth contact to their skin. The point of these bite inhibition exercises is to first teach your pup to have a "soft mouth", and then to teach him that the instant his teeth touch human skin, play time is over.

REMEMBER: The "ouch" is not as important as the end of interaction, so if your pup doesn't respond to the "ouch" or seems to get more riled up, just skip it and simply stop playing or interacting in any way for a few minutes.