

Help! My Puppy is Biting

While it won't heal those puncture wounds on your hands and ankles any faster, it may be comforting to know that if your puppy is biting—you are not alone. In fact, mouthing and biting are normal (but not desirable) behaviors and essentially all puppies will bite. The good news is that as your puppy gets older, much of the nipping and mouthing will disappear, particularly if you don't encourage it through aggressive play. Fortunately, most biting done by puppies is playful and there are several ways you can discourage your puppy from choosing you as a target.

- Avoid aggressive play. Tug-of-war, wrestling, and boxing at a puppy's mouth with your hands will get your puppy excited and teach them that hands are appropriate chew toys.
- Redirect the puppy to appropriate toys. Virtually all puppies will need to chew on something, so make sure there are plenty of acceptable chew toys available. If your puppy attacks your hand, ankles, or clothing, offer them a favorite toy instead. When they go for the toy, give them lots of praise and attention.
- Practice the high yip. When play between puppies gets too rough, the one being bitten will give a high-pitched, piercing yip. This will startle most puppies and cause them to stop biting for a moment. You can mimic the high yip, then withdraw your hand and substitute something else.
- Use a Gentle Leader Collar. The Gentle Leader Collar gives you an effective way to control a puppy's head and mouth. If your puppy starts to go for a hand, pull gently and steadily on the lead. As soon as they stop, release the pressure and praise them.
- Keep your fingers curled. Many puppies will not bite at a closed fist as they will open hand.
- Use time-out. If your puppy gets too riled up, won't listen to you, and immediately starts to bite again after you've tried some other approaches, then isolating them for a brief period may be needed.