

Puppy Mouthing & Play Biting

Biting is one of the most common complaints made by owners of puppies. Puppies have needle-sharp teeth and seem to enjoy chewing on hands, arms, toes, pant legs, shirt sleeves and anything else they can get their mouths on.

Just because your pup bites probably does not mean you've got an aggressive or bad dog. It could simply mean you've got a normal dog. Investigating things with their mouths is perfectly natural and normal for puppies.

There are some very simple steps you can take to teach your puppy exactly what's acceptable and what isn't. Before starting this exercise, make sure your pup has a couple of good quality, acceptable toys. And remember be consistent.

8 Steps to Prevent Puppy Mouthing

1. Avoid deliberately putting your hands directly in your puppy's mouth so he knows your hands are not chew toys.
2. Play with your dog with appropriate toys. This can be a ball, stuffed animal, squeaky toy, rope, or any other toy that your dog likes and you approve of as a chew toy.
3. If your puppy puts her mouth on you (even if it doesn't hurt) or grabs your clothes, give a loud, high-pitched "yelp!" or "ouch!" Make sure it's loud enough to distract the puppy and get her to let go.
4. As soon as the puppy is distracted (lets go of your fingers), immediately encourage the pup to play with an appropriate chew toy or bone. This is called "redirection".
5. Should your puppy decide to grab your hand (foot, shirt, etc.) again, give a loud "ouch!" and redirect the pup's attention to the toy.
6. Give lots of praise when the pup has the toy in her mouth instead of your hand.
7. For persistent mouthers, when the puppy latches on to your hand, give a loud "ouch!" and walk away and leave the room, completely ignoring your puppy. *Make sure every human leaves the room as well. This is a must.

Ignoring means: Don't pet your pup; Don't lecture your pup; Don't punish your pup; Don't talk to your pup; Don't even look at your pup. Your puppy will probably follow you around. That's OK. Dogs are very social creatures who love to be near their people. Continue to ignore the pup, no matter how hard it is.

8. After a minute or so of ignoring your puppy, try to play with her again...with an appropriate toy. If she mouths you again, "yelp!" and leave the room (repeat Step 7). Eventually your puppy will get the idea that if she wants to play with you or anyone else in the family, she has to keep her teeth to herself!

The 5 Basic Steps to Housetraining

1) Be consistent with your dogs feeding schedule, potty breaks and the words you use to cue him to relieve himself.

A) The first step to housetraining is you must be consistent. Like children, dogs benefit from a **“regular feeding schedule”**. By eating at predictable times, it will be easier to know when your dog will need to relieve himself. So, it's extremely important to be consistent with your dogs “feeding times”. Also, during the housetraining process, you shouldn't leave your dog's food out all the time. Give your dog should 10 to 15 minutes to eat his meal, and any food he has not eaten at the end of that time should be taken away.

B) Being consistent also means **using the same “cue words” or phrases to let your dog know it's time for his “potty break”**. After your dog finishes eating, tell him “let's go potty” or something similar. When used consistently, your dog will come to associate this phrase with the act of relieving himself. The key is that all family members must use the same exact phrase and tone of voice. In addition, if you are taking your dog out in the backyard to relieve himself, don't just let him outside and assume he will do the right thing. You must go out there with him. Take your dog to the same area of the yard or walk him to the same place each time and remember that dogs usually like to pee and poop in different areas. Keep in mind; some dogs are uncomfortable about relieving themselves if you are too close. If this sounds like your dog, you might want to consider using a retractable leash on his potty breaks or give him his space. As you take your dog to the appropriate spot, use your potty phrase such as “go potty” in a soft pleasant tone of voice. He will soon learn to relieve himself on cue.

C) The last part of the equation is that you must also remember to **be consistent when you give your dog potty breaks**. This will allow your dog's metabolism to get on a consistent schedule. Remember, it's important to always be consistent in every facet of your dogs potty break opportunities from the time he eats, to the exact words or phrase you use to tell him that it's time to go outside, as well as when you take him outside.

2) Always reward good behavior.

The next step in housetraining your dog is to ALWAYS reward good behavior. When you and your dog are outside in the appropriate spot and your dog begins to show signs he is getting ready to relieve himself (sniffing the ground, circling) quietly say “good boy”. As he is doing his business, very softly praise him some more, “good boy”. When he's finished, do NOT call him to you to reward him, or he will think you're rewarding him for coming when called. You must reward him for relieving himself in the appropriate potty spot by WALKING OVER TO HIM and giving him his treat. This is a key distinction.

Also, do NOT bring your dog inside or end the walk right after he's finished his business. Wait at least a few minutes before doing so. If you bring your dog inside right away, he

might begin to delay relieving himself so he can stay outside longer (since he knows he gets taken inside as soon as he finishes). Be smart.

3) Provide a comfortable location for your dog to relieve himself.

The 3rd step in successfully houstraining your dog is to make sure you have provided a comfortable location for your dog to relieve himself. Letting your dog outside many times during the day is one part of successful houstraining. Another part is **making sure his outdoor potty area is appealing to him**. Most dogs prefer grass or dirt, to rough uneven or hard surfaces such as gravel or cement. This is very important if your dog is soiling carpets or rugs and doesn't have a soft area outside. This is also important if you have a small or fragile breed and if as a puppy your dog wasn't acclimated to accept surfaces other than grass. If your dog is particularly sensitive to weather extremes, try to compensate for that in his outside area. Shovel a path in the snow, install an awning to keep off the rain, make sure your grassy area has some shade. Dogs who aren't given a comfortable location quickly figure out that it's much more pleasant to sneak off in a private part of the house and relieve themselves in heated or air-conditioned comfort, rather than braving the elements outside.

4) Don't give your dog the chance to have an accident.

The 4th step in houstraining your dog is preventing accidents. A big part of houstraining successfully is managing your dog's environment so consistently that he never has the chance to have an accident. **An accident represents a breakdown in your supervision**. The more accidents your dog has, the greater chance they will become habits. Areas that are repeatedly soiled hold odors that draw your dog back to the same spot over and over again. *Getting rid of odors is an important part of discouraging a house soiling habit.* Two products specifically formulated for this are Nature's Miracle and Simple Solution (Regular carpet cleaners are not effective odor neutralizers).

Since neither you nor your dog is perfect, a few accidents are bound to happen, but **during the houstraining process try as hard as you can to know where your dog is every second**. You don't want to give your dog an opportunity to get out of sight and relieve himself. You can provide constant supervision by using a combination of methods. Close doors to other rooms to keep your dog in sight or use **baby gates** to prevent your dog from leaving the room.

Supervision does **NOT** mean your dog is confined away from you when you are home. This is especially not appropriate for puppies who need to spend lots of time with people and other dogs for socialization purposes. When you leave the house or are too busy and can't keep your eye on your dog, confine him to a **"safe-room"** such as a kitchen or a laundry room, a puppy pen, or a crate. Dogs that are soiling overnight usually need to be confined to a safe-room, puppy pen or crate overnight until they are trained. Another option may be tethering your dog to an eye hook or piece of furniture in your bedroom and letting him sleep on a dog bed beside your bed.

When he whines in the middle of the night letting you know he has to relieve himself, you would get up and take him to his potty area. This is true with a crate as well. Before using a crate for confinement, you must gradually train your dog to accept the crate so he will be comfortable there. This has to be done very slowly & in a positive manner.

With a crate, you must also be extremely careful not to confine your dog longer than he can control his bladder or bowels and you MUST still provide scheduled potty breaks. If you don't, your dog may soil when left alone for long periods of time. If this happens, it will make your house training much more difficult.

To counter this, while he's a puppy you may want to consider hiring a pet sitter or neighbor to let him out. You can also give your dog an indoor potty area if getting him outside every hour or two is not an option. This might be a corner of the kitchen, a laundry room or a puppy playpen. Cover his potty area with either puppy pads or a liter pan and over time remove them (one at a time if necessary) as he becomes more reliable in using them. Don't use newspapers to cover his potty area. Puppy pads have a leak resistant side that will prevent leaks and are easy to clean up. In addition, they come with a urine scent to attract your dog to use them.

5) Discipline, scolding or punishment are not necessary and should not be used.

One of the most critical steps that all puppy owners must learn is that discipline isn't necessary and doesn't work. If you catch your dog "in the act", the best thing to do is to **first startle him** and then **redirect him** to the appropriate spot. You accomplish this by either "Clapping your hands" or saying "No". **Startle your dog just enough so hopefully he will stop peeing or pooping but not so much that you frighten him. The last thing you want is for your dog to be afraid to relieve himself in your presence.** You just want to interrupt the event (Startle him) and show your dog the right location (Redirect him). **Quickly but pleasantly, use your cue words: "let's go potty" or "let's go outside" and hurry your dog outside.** If you must, pick your puppy up but be prepared to get dirty. Some dogs will just continue doing their thing. If your dog finishes his business outside, praise and reward him as usual.

If you happen to find an accident somewhere, disciplining your dog after the fact is pointless. Your dog cannot make the link between his mess and his past behavior from even a few minutes ago. Don't be tempted to think, "He looks guilty" or "He knows better". HE DOESN'T. He's not looking guilty, he is scared and is showing you a submissive body language because he's feels threatened by your reaction. Never ever get physical with your dog or rub his nose in his mess. It is counterproductive and will only ruin your relationship with your dog.