

# Just Behaving Teething Guide

**Document Title: “Navigating Puppy Teething the Just Behaving Way: A Comprehensive Guide to Chewing, Training, and Patience”**

## Introduction:

Teething is a natural – but often challenging – phase in your puppy’s life. Those razor-sharp baby teeth will fall out and make way for adult teeth, and along the way your puppy will *feel* it. Chewing, nipping, and general mouthiness tend to spike during this stage, which can test any family’s patience. The good news is that with the Just Behaving philosophy, you won’t just “survive” teething – you’ll use it as an opportunity to teach your puppy lifelong good habits. This guide provides an in-depth look at puppy teething from a Just Behaving perspective. We’ll cover when and how teething happens, what behavioral changes to expect, and – most importantly – practical strategies to manage it in line with Just Behaving’s pillars of Mentorship, Calmness, Structured Leadership, Prevention, and Indirect Correction. By following this guide, you can meet your puppy’s teething needs while preventing destructive habits, ensuring your puppy grows into a polite, happy dog who doesn’t wreck your home. Let’s turn those teething troubles into a training triumph!

## Developmental Stages of Teething

Understanding when teething happens will help you prepare. Puppies actually begin getting teeth as tiny newborns, but the major teething stage that owners notice is when the adult teeth replace the baby teeth:

- **Baby Teeth Erupt (2–8 weeks old):** Puppies develop a set of 28 deciduous (baby) teeth very early. If you got your puppy at 8+ weeks, they probably already had a full mouth of little sharp teeth. At this stage, puppies are exploring their world and might play-bite their littermates, but serious chewing on objects hasn’t started yet.
- **Transitional Period (8–12 weeks):** In this window, puppies have baby teeth and a growing curiosity. They may start mild chewing on toys or anything they find, mostly to explore texture and relieve boredom. It’s a great time to introduce chew toys and begin teaching what’s appropriate to nibble. (Just Behaving and early caregivers would already be guiding pups with safe toys during this time.)
- **\*\*\*\*Major Teething Phase (around 3 to 6 months old)\*\*:** This is the big one. Typically starting roughly at 12 weeks and lasting until about 6 months, puppies lose their baby teeth and grow in 42 adult teeth. For most breeds, the peak of discomfort is between 4 and 5 months old. You may literally find tiny teeth on the floor or in your puppy’s toys (don’t worry if you don’t – many teeth are swallowed harmlessly). Your pup’s gums can be sore and itchy; you might notice mild reddening of the gums, drooling, or the pup frantically chewing more than ever to relieve the feeling. Think of a human baby getting teeth – they want to bite on things to massage the gums. Puppies are the same! During this phase, chewing is a self-soothing behavior. It’s important to note that increased nipping (directed at you or other pets) can also occur now – not from aggression, but from discomfort and a need for oral outlet. This stage is when your puppy’s chewing instinct will be strongest, and when they are likely to “test” objects with their mouth. (If not managed, this is when table legs get gnawed and shoes get shredded.)

- Completion (6–7 months old): By 6 months of age, most pups have all their adult teeth. The teething discomfort subsides, and you'll notice your puppy isn't as driven to chew constantly. *However*, this doesn't mean they'll never chew again – dogs do enjoy chewing throughout life for fun and relaxation – but that intense physiological urge will calm down. If you've done things right, by this time your pup only knows chew toys and dog treats as chewable items, and won't suddenly start on your furniture just because they *could*. The habits formed during the earlier months carry forward. In a Just Behaving household, that means the dog has learned from the start what's fair game and what isn't.

**How Teething Affects Puppies:** Expect your puppy to be a bit more restless or mouthy during the peak teething period. Just like a toddler cutting teeth, they might be uncomfortable. Some common effects on behavior include:

- Intense Chewing: This is the headline! Your pup will seek relief by chewing vigorously. You'll see them really working on toys with their jaws, and they may target all sorts of textures (wood, fabric, plastic – whatever gives that gum relief). This isn't mischief; it's instinctive therapy for their gums.
- Sore Gums and Minor Irritations: Don't be surprised if your puppy's gums bleed a little bit when they're chewing – small smears of blood on a chew toy are normal during teething. The areas where new teeth push through can be tender. Most pups handle it fine, but a few might be a bit whiny some days or hesitant to eat hard kibble at the worst of it. (You can soften food with a little water if needed, but usually they continue eating normally.)
- Increased Nipping/Playing with Mouth: You might notice your puppy starts grabbing your hands, clothing, or the leash more during play at 4-5 months. Partly, they're testing their new teeth and looking for things to gnaw; partly, their excitement threshold might be lower because they're a bit uncomfortable. It's important during this time to stay consistent with your bite inhibition training – if pup nips skin or clothes, yelp “Ouch” and withdraw attention (just as you likely started doing earlier). Everyone in the family should continue the rule that human skin is not a chew toy. (We'll revisit training tips below.)
- Possible Mild Irritability or Low-Grade Stress: Most puppies are troopers about teething, but it is a developmental stress on the body. Your pup might have occasional off days – maybe a little less patience or a bit more anxious chewing. Think of how you feel with a toothache; it's similar for them. This is why it's so crucial during teething to provide comfort and outlets – we want to alleviate their stress and not add to it with any harsh discipline. In fact, a pup that's hurting and then gets yelled at for chewing is set up to become anxious or confused. The Just Behaving approach is the opposite: empathize with their needs, meet those needs in acceptable ways, and guide them patiently. This nurtures the pup's trust and confidence in you as a calm leader, even as you set boundaries.

### **Proactive Prevention Strategies for Teething**

The cornerstone of managing a teething puppy is prevention – a core Just Behaving principle. In practical terms, prevention during teething means arranging your puppy's environment and routine so that they have plenty of correct things to chew – and almost no chance to chew the

wrong things. By being one step ahead of your puppy's needs, you dramatically reduce the "No! drop that!" incidents. Here's how to implement prevention for a teething pup:

- **Puppy-Proof Your Home (Again):** You may have done an initial puppy-proof when you first brought your pup home, but it's time to do another sweep with fresh eyes. Now that your pup is a little older and *much* more determined to chew, make sure anything you value or that could be dangerous is well out of reach or secured. Common targets include shoes, kids' toys, TV remotes, books, eyeglasses, pillows, and electrical cords. Use baby gates or closed doors to block off rooms if needed. Consider what your pup can reach at this age – they're taller and more agile each week. For example, a low coffee table that was safe at 10 weeks might not be at 20 weeks when your pup can hop onto the couch and reach the end table. Do a fresh audit of each room. This isn't forever; it's a temporary safety measure until the pup reliably ignores these items. Think of it like "toddler-proofing." By removing temptation, you set your puppy up for success – they can't chew what they can't access.
- **Safe Confinement When Unsupervised:** Prevention sometimes means knowing when *not* to give your puppy freedom. If you need to focus elsewhere or leave the house, utilize a crate or a puppy-safe enclosure. This is not only for housetraining – it's a vital tool to prevent accidental destruction or ingestion of something harmful. When in their crate or pen, the puppy should have safe chew toys to keep them occupied (more on those below). This way, you know that if the chewing urge strikes while you're on a work call, your pup isn't in the next room experimenting on your furniture. Some owners feel guilty confining a puppy, but remember: a safely confined, entertained puppy is not getting in trouble and not being scolded, which means their experience remains positive. You are actually being a responsible mentor by managing their space. Over time, as the pup proves that they make good choices (because *you've taught them what to chew*), you'll be able to grant more freedom. Just Behaving is all about gradually earning trust; during teething, it's wise to restrict unsupervised roaming unless you're 100% confident in your pup.
- **Anticipate High-Risk Times:** Many puppies have certain times of day when they get bursts of energy or chewiness – often in the evening ("the zoomies hour") or after a nap. Plan ahead for these moments. For example, if you know 7pm is when your pup typically gets hyper and mouthy, around 6:45pm engage them with a constructive activity: perhaps a short training session followed by giving them a frozen chew toy to work on, or a supervised play with a tug rope (letting them bite the rope, not your hands). By filling that time with an outlet, you head off the behavior before it escalates. Similarly, before you sit down to watch a movie (when the pup might otherwise seek attention by grabbing something), proactively give them a stuffed Kong or a long-lasting chew in their bed. Structure the pup's day to preempt boredom – regular intervals of exercise, chew time, training, and rest. A puppy that's well-engaged on your schedule has fewer chances to invent his *own* (mis)adventures. This proactive scheduling is part of Structured Leadership: you're kindly dictating the rhythm of the pup's day so that their needs are met in positive ways, leaving less room for unwanted behaviors.
- **Use Taste Deterrents if Needed:** As a supplemental prevention measure, some owners like to apply bitter-tasting sprays (like Bitter Apple) to furniture legs or other items the puppy has shown interest in. This can be useful as a backup – it might discourage a

sneaky chew attempt if the pup manages to get near a forbidden object. In the Just Behaving approach, we prefer to rely on management and training first, but a deterrent can be an indirect way to make an object “unappealing” without confrontation. If you choose to use one, make sure your puppy still has plenty of appealing alternatives (you don’t want to just say “don’t chew that” without also saying “here, chew this instead”). Many puppies will try something once, get a nasty taste, and promptly decide that item is off the menu – which can support your overall training. Just be sure the product is pet-safe and only use it on appropriate surfaces. And remember, deterrents complement supervision, not replace it; you shouldn’t spray the whole house and assume the pup is fine unsupervised. Think of it as extra insurance to reinforce the lesson that furniture = yucky, toys = fun.

- **Household Cooperation:** Prevention works best when everyone in the family is on the same page. All family members (and even frequent visitors or dog-sitters) should know the plan for managing the teething pup. This means keeping doors closed, belongings out of reach, and not leaving, say, a laptop cord dangling invitingly. It also means everyone should follow the same rules: e.g., if you’ve decided the puppy isn’t allowed to mouth hands, ensure nobody is roughhousing with the pup using their hands (no matter how cute it seems). If you’re giving the pup a chilled carrot to chew as a healthy gum soother, make sure others know that’s allowed so they don’t panic seeing the pup with “food” on the carpet. Clear communication among humans will prevent mixed signals to the puppy. One great strategy is to make a short “teething game plan” list and post it on the fridge – list the puppy-proofing must-dos (e.g., “keep closet door shut; put shoes away”) and the key response tactics (“if you see her chewing the couch, do X”). This way everyone becomes a consistent participant in the puppy’s mentorship. Consistency across the board is a powerful preventive tool – it means the puppy encounters a unified approach and learns much faster.

By rigorously implementing these prevention strategies, you are essentially making it easy for your puppy to succeed. You’re creating an environment where the right behavior (chewing toys) is readily available and the wrong behavior (chewing your stuff) is difficult or impossible. This level of management might seem labor-intensive, but it is temporary. Remember, we’re investing effort now so that in a few months your dog has impeccable habits and we can give them more freedom without worry. Prevention is kinder in the long run than constantly correcting mistakes – it keeps the puppy’s trust and curiosity intact while protecting your home at the same time.

### **Structured Chew Training: Teaching Chew Manners**

Prevention and management are vital, but equally important is actively teaching your puppy what to do with that urge to chew. This is where structured chew training comes in – you’re going to show your pup that chewing specific items is not only allowed, but encouraged and rewarding, while anything else is off-limits. Over time, this forms a habit so strong that your dog will automatically seek out their toys when they feel like chewing. Here’s how to conduct chew training in line with Just Behaving principles:

1. **Provide a “Chew Buffet” of Appropriate Toys:** Puppies have individual preferences for texture and shape. Some love soft plush toys (though beware of swallowing stuffing), others love hard nylon bones, others go crazy for rubber toys that they can really gnaw on. Offer a variety to see

what your pup likes best. A Just Behaving tip is to always have a few chew toys available in the puppy's area at all times. During teething, having something within immediate reach can make the difference between your pup settling down to chew their Kong versus wandering off to sample a table leg. Make these toys interesting: you can stuff or smear a bit of peanut butter inside a hollow toy, or soak a cloth rope toy in low-sodium broth and freeze it. These extra touches make the toy even more enticing than any household item. The goal is to set the puppy up to choose the right thing on their own. When they do, praise them warmly – you want the puppy to feel that chewing their toys is not just physically satisfying but also wins your approval and attention. This positive reinforcement is done in a calm, happy tone (no need for treats every time; your gentle praise and maybe a pet is enough, as the chew itself is the reward). In essence, you're saying *"Yes! Good puppy, chew that!"* which is a refreshing change from *"No, drop that"* – for both you and the dog.

**2. Conduct Supervised Chew Sessions:** Set aside short periods (even 5-10 minutes) where you actively engage your puppy with chew toys. For example, in the evening when the family is winding down, you might sit on the floor with the pup, present a chew toy, and encourage them to get into it. Hold one end of a durable toy while they chew the other, or toss a chew for them to pounce on and gnaw. By initiating these sessions, you make chewing an interactive, fun, *sanctioned* activity. It's also a great way to instill a routine – perhaps after dinner every night, the puppy learns *"this is my chew time on my mat while the humans watch TV."* Puppies thrive on routine, and incorporating a daily chew-time ritual gives them an expected outlet. During these sessions, if the pup tries to divert to something else (say they drop the toy and nose at the carpet or your shoe), gently steer them back: wiggle the toy, make it enticing, praise when they resume chewing it. You are mentoring by guiding attention. Over a few weeks of consistent chew sessions, your pup will start to seek out their toys at that hour on their own. This structured approach not only burns off that teething urge but also reinforces to the pup that *chewing belongs in this context, on these items*. It's analogous to a child having storytime every evening – it becomes a habit they look forward to and a predictable part of their day.

**3. Reinforce Toy Chewing Throughout the Day:** Beyond dedicated sessions, stay alert and capture good behavior when it happens. If you notice your puppy wandering over to their toy bin and selecting a bone to chew (instead of nibbling the rug), mark that moment with praise: *"Good girl, get your toy!"* in a pleased voice. You can even occasionally reward this choice with a small treat or a few kibbles dropped next to them as they chew, to strongly reinforce it. This is in line with Just Behaving's use of natural or intrinsic rewards – the pup is doing a desirable action on their own, and you acknowledge it calmly (as opposed to only paying attention when she's doing something wrong). By catching and rewarding the pup for independently choosing right, you're essentially training without a formal command – the puppy learns that chewing toys not only feels good, it makes mom or dad happy and sometimes yields an extra goodie. Conversely, make sure that if the pup ever drags something inappropriate to chew, that item does not become enjoyable. Immediately and calmly remove it and replace with a toy. We want the pup to conclude that chewing a shoe = boring interruption, chewing a toy = continuous fun and maybe praise. Over time, the puppy internalizes *"I only chew my things"*

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as a rule, without even seeming to realize it – it's just what they've always done. That's the beauty of the Just Behaving method: the dog ends up doing the right thing as if it were second nature.

**4. Teach a Release/Swap Command:** As part of chew training, it's helpful to introduce a gentle cue like "Give" or "Drop it," which will be useful if the puppy does get a hold of something they shouldn't or even just to take a toy from them without tussle. You can teach this proactively using their toys: While the pup is chewing on a toy, offer a small treat at their nose (or another toy) with your other hand and say "Drop it" (or your chosen word) in a pleasant voice. Most puppies will spit out what's in their mouth to get the treat/other toy – at that exact moment, praise and then give them the treat/toy. This trade game teaches that giving something up when asked is rewarding. It's a form of indirect correction training – you're not prying the item from their mouth or yelling; you're guiding them to release willingly. Practice this a few times a week with low-stakes items (don't start with their favorite chew, maybe start with a lesser toy) and always make sure they get the original toy back or a nice reward, so it stays positive. Over time, you'll have a puppy who, if they do pick up a forbidden object or finish a chew and you want to take it, will readily drop it on command. This is far less stressful for both of you than chasing a puppy who's playing keep-away with a sock. It reinforces the idea that human leaders can be trusted when they ask for something – often we give something in return (mentorship built on trust, not force). Additionally, knowing "drop it" means if one day your pup does pick up a dangerous item, you have a way to get them to relinquish it calmly. It's an important life skill that goes hand-in-hand with polite chewing habits.

In structured chew training, the common theme is intentional guidance. You're not leaving chewing to chance; you're actively showing your pup the ropes. Under your mentorship, chewing becomes an activity with rules and boundaries – much like play or feeding time – all within a calm, controlled framework. Remember to keep your cool and sense of humor during this training: puppies might still every so often run off with a sock or test something new with their mouths. Treat it as a teaching moment, not a personal failure. With every consistent response from you, your puppy is learning. And one day, not far off, you'll realize they haven't even *tried* to chew anything but their toys in ages – that's when you know your training has become their habit.

### **Proactive Management Techniques during Teething**

Even with great prevention and training, teething can be a bumpy ride. Proactive management means anticipating issues before they arise and having a plan to handle the inevitable tricky moments calmly and effectively. Here are key management techniques to employ day-to-day:

- **Keep Your Pup Tired (But Not Overstimulated):** A well-exercised puppy is generally less intense about random chewing. Ensure your teething pup gets age-appropriate exercise and mental stimulation each day. This could be a couple of brisk play sessions or walks, some short training games, and safe socialization outings. Physical activity helps work off excess energy that might otherwise go into frenzied chewing. Mental stimulation (like a short obedience practice or a food puzzle toy) can tire them out, too. The Just Behaving approach to exercise is balanced – we want to satisfy the pup's energy needs *without* winding them up into overexcitement. So choose activities that end on a calm note. For example, after a 15-minute walk, give the pup a few minutes of sniffing in the yard (sniffing is calming), then offer a chew toy when back inside to help them settle. If you play a game of fetch, wind it down after several throws and transition to a cool-down chew session. Structure your play-exercise-chew routine so that the puppy learns to relax after exertion. This routine not only helps with teething but establishes a lifelong pattern: excitement is followed by relaxation. If your puppy is still

buzzing and starting to gnaw things after plenty of exercise, that's a cue they might be overtired (like a cranky toddler). In that case, calmly crate them with a chew toy for a nap – often a bit of enforced rest with something to soothe the gums is the reset they need.

- **Identify and Relieve Stressors:** Sometimes teething behaviors get worse if a puppy is experiencing other stresses (e.g., a change in schedule, too much chaos in the home, etc.). Keep an eye on your pup's overall emotional state. Just Behaving philosophy puts a big emphasis on maintaining calm, low-stress environments for pups, which helps prevent a lot of misbehavior. If your household has been extra busy or loud, try to ensure your puppy has a quiet space to retreat (with a chew toy to comfort them). If the puppy seems to be chewing more intensely after, say, guests leave, it could be their way to self-soothe. A proactive manager would notice "okay, she's extra mouthy tonight after all that excitement – I'll give her some quiet time in her playpen with a frozen bone to help her decompress." In addition, maintain your pup's routine as much as possible. Puppies find stability in knowing what comes next. Feedings, playtimes, and bedtimes around the same time each day create a rhythm that can make the teething phase less overwhelming for them. A pup who knows dinner is coming soon, for example, might not start stress-chewing the chair leg out of anxiety or hunger. Use structure to your advantage. And remember, your own demeanor matters: if you stay calm and upbeat, your puppy is more likely to mirror that. If you're frantic or yelling due to chewing incidents, the pup can become more anxious (or think it's a game), fueling a cycle of more chewing. Proactive management often boils down to controlling the atmosphere: a calm home, a tired pup, and a consistent routine form the backdrop for smoother teething weeks.
- **Supervision as a Strategy:** It may sound obvious, but active supervision is your best friend during teething. This means really keeping an eye on your puppy whenever they are loose in the house. Instead of reacting after a puppy has been quietly demolishing something for 10 minutes, you intervene at the first nibble. In practice, this might mean temporarily limiting the pup to whatever room you are in, so you can watch them (use baby gates or closed doors to keep them from sneaking off). Some owners even "tether" the puppy to their belt loop with a light leash when moving around the house – this way the pup is always within a few feet and cannot ghost away to a corner to chew a table. However you do it, close supervision lets you catch the pup's exploratory mouthing *immediately*, which is ideal for training. If you see your pup licking or testing an off-limits object, you can preemptively clap or call their name and say "eh-eh, here, chew this" and present a toy. You've averted any damage and delivered the lesson right then and there. Yes, this requires vigilance on your part, but it dramatically accelerates the puppy's learning. Every time you successfully redirect before a full-on chew, you've prevented a mistake and reinforced the correct behavior. The need for eagle-eye supervision will decrease as your pup internalizes the rules. Think of it as an investment: a few months of being extra watchful yields a dog who can later be trusted un-watched in the house. Just Behaving calls this "setting them up for success", and nowhere is it more applicable than supervising a teething pup.
- **Employ Indirect Corrections (Consistently):** In moments when prevention fails – perhaps your attention lapsed or the pup got inventive – and you find your puppy with jaws on something forbidden, how you respond is key. Just Behaving advocates indirect

correction, meaning we correct the behavior without heavy-handed punishment or creating fear. Practically, for chewing, an indirect correction might be: a sharp sound (clap, “Ah-ah!”) to interrupt, followed immediately by removing the item from the puppy or the puppy from the item, and then redirecting as discussed. Another effective technique is a brief social timeout: if the puppy was happily playing and then started biting your ankle, you’d say “Too bad,” and calmly put them in their crate or behind a baby gate for a minute or two to “chill.” This mimics what mother dogs or siblings do – play stops when a puppy gets too mouthy

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. After a short pause, you let them back out and resume normal interaction. The idea is to show that unwanted behavior makes fun things go away, but without any yelling or physical force. It’s indirect because the consequence (loss of freedom or attention) is tied to their action, not to you being scary. Never hit your puppy or scream at them for chewing – not only is it ineffective (many pups won’t even understand what the anger is about, especially if caught after the fact), it also breaks down the trust you’ve been building. A puppy who fears “If I chew this, I get smacked” may stop chewing in front of you but will likely just do it out of sight – or grow anxious. With indirect correction, the puppy experiences a neutral consequence (oh, I lost that item/privilege) that gently discourages the behavior *while keeping your relationship positive*. The consistency part is vital: every single time you catch a wrong-chew, you should respond the same way – calmly interrupt and redirect or calmly timeout. If sometimes the pup chews the rug and nothing happens, other times it’s taken away, they might risk it. Clear, consistent consequences make the learning process faster and less stressful. Essentially, chewing wrong = it never pays off; chewing right = it’s enjoyable and maybe even earns praise. You become as predictable as gravity in this regard, which is exactly what a good mentor/leader should be.

### **Indirect Correction Techniques for Nipping or Hard Biting**

Alongside object chewing, teething often brings an uptick in puppies biting at people – often playfully, but it can hurt! It’s important to address nipping in a way that teaches bite inhibition without causing fear or encouraging more excitement. Here are Just Behaving-aligned techniques for those needle-teeth-on-skin moments, all of which use indirect ways to communicate “that’s not acceptable”:

- “Yelp” and Withdraw: This method leverages puppies’ own language. When littermates play and one bites too hard, the other will yelp and stop playing for a moment. You can do the same. If your puppy’s teeth clamp on your hand or arm with any force, emit a high-pitched “Ouch!” or “Yip!” (loud enough to startle slightly but not screamed in anger)

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. Immediately pull your hand away and turn your body aside or even step out of reach. The key is to end all fun attention right then – no scolding beyond the yelp, no pushing the puppy (which they might interpret as continued play). This sudden loss of a playmate is an indirect consequence of biting too hard. Wait 5-10 seconds (puppy will often look surprised or momentarily stop), then resume interaction gently. This teaches: *“Bite too hard and playtime*



*ends for a moment.*” Over a few repetitions, many puppies learn to soften their bite. If your pup comes back even more excited after your yelp (some do – they think it’s a game invite), then use a time-out instead: calmly place them in their pen for a minute immediately after the hard bite. This accomplishes the same goal of removing the reward (your attention). Always return and give the pup a chance to play more appropriately after a short break – we want to show them the correct way rather than just end play altogether. Consistency is crucial: everyone interacting with the puppy should respond to nips this way every single time. It may take a few weeks, but puppies do learn that human skin is sensitive and off-limits for those teeth

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- **Redirection to Toys:** Often, nipping happens because the puppy is trying to initiate play or is overexcited. You want to channel that energy onto a toy instead of your limbs. The moment your pup starts mouthing your hand or pant leg, grab a designated tug toy or soft chew and engage them with it. Wiggle the toy around, make it fun so they latch onto it instead. Encourage them by saying “Yes, get your toy!” in a happy voice as they chomp it. Essentially, make the toy come alive as a more interesting target than you are. Once they switch to the toy, you can even have a gentle tug game or let them “win” the toy and chew on it. This teaches the pup that *“when I feel like biting, I should grab my toy, not my human.”* You are proactively fulfilling the biting urge in an acceptable way. Be careful not to accidentally reward a pup for biting you first (“if I bite Mom, she gives me a toy!”). The trick is to anticipate. If you know, for example, your pup always gets nippy in the late evening, have a toy in your back pocket and start the redirect at the first sign of mouthing – ideally before teeth even make contact. If they’re already nibbling you, you can still redirect, just pair it with the yelp technique: yelp to mark it was too hard, withdraw, then offer the toy to re-initiate appropriate play. With repetition, your pup will start to seek out toys to bite when they’re feeling mouthy (especially if you consistently *offer praise or a little game when they choose the toy*). This is exactly what we want – the puppy learns biting is okay as long as it’s not on humans. It’s a form of self-redirection that we encourage until it becomes habit.
- **Calm Detachment for Persistent Nipping:** If you have a particularly persistent landshark puppy who sometimes just won’t quit biting at you (some breeds or individuals can be quite tenacious during teething), the best response can be a version of a time-out that is very brief but immediate. For instance, the pup keeps jumping and nipping at your clothes despite toy redirection. In that moment, say nothing, gently take hold of their harness or collar, and escort them to a puppy-safe timeout area (like an exercise pen or behind a baby gate in the same room) for 1-2 minutes. This isn’t punishment per se – it’s literally a chance for them to cool off. By remaining silent and neutral as you do this, you’re avoiding giving any attention that could be misconstrued as play. After a minute, if the pup is calmer or chewing a toy in the pen, you can invite them out to interact again. This communicates that over-the-top behavior stops the interaction and results in temporary loss of freedom. It’s indirectly teaching self-control. When you let them back out, do so calmly – maybe even ask for a simple “sit” to re-engage their brain – and then proceed as normal. If they go right back to crazy nipping, back into the pen they go, again with no drama. It may take a couple of repeats in a session, but puppies quickly realize, *“When I get too wild, I suddenly end up alone...okay, maybe I’ll tone it down to*

*keep my person here.*” As soon as they choose a calmer behavior or grab a toy instead of your sleeve, *praise that* and give attention, so they learn that’s how to keep the fun going. This approach aligns with Just Behaving’s ethos of calm, consistent consequences without intimidation. You’re not yelling or getting angry; you’re guiding the puppy toward the understanding that gentle, polite behavior keeps them included in the group, whereas frenetic biting makes the fun stop. This is very much how adult dogs correct rude puppies – not by viciously attacking them, but by abruptly cutting off engagement or giving a well-timed signal and then ignoring the pup for a bit. We mimic that to great effect.

Throughout all these techniques, maintain the Just Behaving mindset: you are a mentor, not an adversary. You’re never coming from a place of anger or punishment, but from teaching and guiding. Indirect correction requires some patience – it’s not as immediately gratifying as yelling “No!” might feel – but it pays off with a puppy who trusts you and understands the lesson, rather than one who is fearful or simply sneaky. By the end of teething, your consistent responses will yield a dog that has excellent bite inhibition (meaning they are very careful with their mouth on people) and a clear idea that human body parts are off-limits. These lessons literally make your dog safer and more enjoyable for life; you’re doing important work during these few months.

### **Real-World Case Examples: Teething Success Stories**

Sometimes it helps to see how all these principles come together in a real family scenario. Here are a couple of case examples illustrating the teething phase handled with the Just Behaving approach:

#### **Case Example 1: “Molly and the Couch Cushion”**

*Molly*, a 5-month-old Golden Retriever puppy, is smack in the middle of teething. Her family has been following the Just Behaving program since they brought her home at 12 weeks. One evening, despite the family’s efforts, Molly got overly excited after dinner (the kids were playing chase with her) and she started zooming around. In her frenzy, she latched onto a couch cushion with her mouth and began tugging. Challenge: A teething pup going for the furniture during play.

**Just Behaving Solution in Action:** Molly’s mom immediately had the kids stop moving (removing the excitement fuel) and clapped loudly once to get Molly’s attention. As Molly paused, Mom said “Molly, no – here, chew this,” and offered Molly her favorite rope toy. Because Molly had been taught from early on, she released the cushion and joyously grabbed the rope. Mom then engaged her in a few minutes of tug play with the rope to let Molly burn off that energy on the toy. Once Molly started to tire, Mom calmly ended the game and gave Molly a command to “Down” and chew the rope. Molly plopped down and gnawed her rope happily. The couch cushion was saved. That weekend, seeing that evenings were a trouble time, the family decided to be proactive: they introduced a new routine where after dinner Molly gets a frozen kong or a long-lasting chew on her dog bed while the family winds down. They also made a rule with the kids that wild chase games are off-limits indoors, to prevent triggering Molly’s grabby behavior. Outcome: Over the next few weeks, Molly learned that after dinner she is expected to relax with her chew (which she was more than happy to do), and she stopped seeking out cushions or other off-limits items. The family stayed consistent in gently interrupting any inappropriate chewing and praising her for using her toys. By 6 months, Molly had all her adult teeth and had never ruined a single piece of furniture. Her urge to chew lessened, but her habit of lounging with a dog toy remained. Takeaway: This case shows prevention (managing play

environment), indirect correction (interrupt and redirect), and structured routine (designated chew time) coming together. Molly's family avoided a potential bad habit (chewing cushions) by nipping it in the bud – they did not punish her, but they also did not ignore the behavior. They channeled it. Molly still got to satisfy her needs, and the house stayed intact.

### **Case Example 2: “Max vs. Bella – A Tale of Two Teething Puppies”**

Sometimes a comparison helps highlight the impact of an approach. Consider two puppies from the same litter, *Max* and *Bella*, who went to different homes. At 4 months old, as teething ramped up, their families took very different tacks:

- **Max's Experience:** Max's family were first-time dog owners and weren't aware of Just Behaving methods. When Max started chewing everything in sight, the family mostly responded reactively. He chewed a shoe – they yelled “No!” and chased him to grab it back (which Max thought was a great game). He gnawed a chair leg – they sprayed it with bitter apple, which deterred him from that chair but then he moved to the coffee table. They gave Max some toys, but usually only when they caught him in the act of chewing something else, so he began to associate chewing wrong-> get a treat (toy). Sometimes they scolded him harshly, other times they were too busy and he chewed unnoticed. By 6 months, Max had destroyed two pairs of shoes and a TV remote, and the family was getting increasingly frustrated and punitive, which in turn made Max sneaky about chewing. He would wait until they left the room to satisfy his urges.
- **Bella's Experience:** Bella's family followed Just Behaving from day one. As teething set in, they anticipated it. They puppy-proofed zealously, so Bella rarely even had access to forbidden items. She always had 3–4 different chew toys at her disposal and got lots of praise for using them. If she even sniffed something like a cabinet corner, someone was there to say “Uh-oh, Bella, here's your bone” in a cheerful way and guide her off. Bella was crated when unsupervised, always with a safe chew. One or two times she did grab a sock, her owners calmly traded her for a toy and made a note to themselves: keep socks off the floor. They also noticed Bella loved chewing wood, so they provided a safe wooden chew stick to satisfy that craving. By 6 months, Bella hadn't ruined anything – she honestly didn't even realize table legs *could* be chewed because she never got the chance to try, and toys were so much fun. Her urge to chew naturally diminished as teething ended, but by then the habit of “I chew my toys” was deeply ingrained. Bella grew into a year-old dog that could be left loose in the living room without incident.

These contrasting tales show how preventive, structured management versus inconsistent, reactive management during teething can lead to very different outcomes. Max's family inadvertently taught him to be a “chewer of things” – through inconsistency and attention (even negative attention) to bad behavior – and they had a much harder time breaking those habits later. Bella's family taught her from puppyhood that chewing is for toys only, and they never allowed the habit of object-destructiveness to form. The Just Behaving way with Bella required more attentiveness up front, but it saved countless headaches and dollars in damage. Any family reading this can take the lesson: if you invest the time and consistency during teething, you will be rewarded with a dog who “just behaves” around your stuff for the rest of her life. It truly is an ounce of prevention for a pound of cure, as the saying goes – and nowhere is that more literally true than with a teething pup.

### **Day-to-Day Teething Management: A Step-by-Step Guide for Families**

To put all the above into an actionable format, here's a step-by-step daily game plan you can follow to get through your puppy's teething phase. Think of this as your quick checklist for consistent management and training each day:

1. **Morning Routine – Chew Before Chaos:** Start the day by letting your puppy burn off energy and attend to potty needs. After their morning walk or play, when you need to get ready for work or attend to the family, give the pup a safe chew (like a stuffed Kong or a chew bone) in their crate or playpen. This satisfies the early-day chewing urge and sets a calm tone. A puppy who begins the day chewing a toy while you have breakfast is a puppy not learning to nip at your heels or chew the cabinets.
2. **Puppy-Proof Refresh:** Each morning or the night before, do a quick sweep of the areas the puppy will have access to that day. Remove any new hazards (did someone leave a new pair of shoes by the door last night? Put them away). Check that gates are latched, cords are taped up or out of reach, and the puppy's toy basket is stocked and accessible. This 5-minute habit greatly reduces the odds of "oops, she got the \_\_\_\_\_."
3. **Structured Activity Blocks:** Plan the puppy's day in cycles of activity and rest. For a young teething pup, an example schedule loop (after morning routine) might be: active time (30-60 min) -> chew/settle time (15-30 min) -> nap time (1-2 hours), repeat. Active time can be training practice, a walk, supervised play, socialization outing, etc. Then transition into a calmer chew time: perhaps when you sit at the computer, give pup a bully stick on her mat. This prevents the puppy from getting bored *during* your busy period and looking for trouble. Then crate/encourage a nap. After the nap, repeat with a potty break and another activity. Such structure ensures your pup isn't left to entertain themselves (and thus chew something) for long stretches. It's essentially a preventative routine – you're always either constructively engaging the pup or safely containing them with something to do. Adapt the lengths to your puppy's age and energy, but the principle stands: oscillate between exercising their body/mind and providing downtime with a chew or rest. This balance also upholds the Just Behaving pillar of Calmness by teaching the pup how to relax after stimulation.
4. **Always Arm Yourself with a Toy:** Make it a personal rule that whenever your puppy is out and about, you have a toy within reach. Keep one in your pocket or within reach in each room. This way, if the pup suddenly gets mouthy or grabs something, you can instantly swap in a toy. It's a simple hack that makes redirection much smoother. It also lets you initiate impromptu chew games if you sense the pup is teetering on the edge of mischief. Essentially, think of a chew toy as an extension of your hand during teething months – you should almost always have one ready to offer. This proactive readiness embodies Mentorship – you're ready to guide at a moment's notice.
5. **Mid-Day Energy Burn & Chew:** If possible, especially for those who work from home or have a lunch break, incorporate a mid-day play or walk and follow it up with a chew session. For instance, a brisk lunchtime walk and then home for a frozen yogurt cup or carrot to chew on. This can prevent the "afternoon boredom blues," where a pup might otherwise go looking for things to chew while you're in a post-lunch meeting. If you're away midday, leaving the pup with a treat puzzle or frozen chew in their crate can serve a similar purpose.

6. **Evening Wind-Down Plan:** As discussed, evenings can be a high-risk time for puppy mayhem as the day's stimulation accumulates. Plan an evening wind-down routine: maybe an hour after dinner, you take the pup for a short walk or potty break, then settle them in a defined area (living room rug, their bed, etc.) with a long-lasting chew while the family relaxes. This should be a chew the puppy really loves, to hold their interest. If the pup tries to wander off seeking trouble, gently lead them back to their spot with the chew. Consistency will teach them that "family TV time = my chew time." Having this routine every night not only protects that part of the day from unwanted incidents but also helps tire their jaws (chewing is work!) so they feel ready to sleep afterward. It's a great way to cap the day – a content puppy gnawing away, releasing any remaining tension.
7. **Bedtime Settling:** Before you tuck the pup in for the night, allow a brief final potty break and consider giving a soft chew or a favorite toy in the crate for a few minutes. Many teething puppies like to have something to suck or chew as they drift off. A plush toy (if they won't destroy and ingest it) or a rolled towel (if they just lick or gently chew it) can provide comfort. Just make sure it's safe to leave overnight. This can prevent late-night whining or chewing on their bedding. A calm end-of-day chew item is like giving a toddler a pacifier – it soothes and signals sleep time. Just Behaving emphasizes ending on calmness; a quietly chewing pup at lights-out is right in line with that.
8. **Consistency and Patience (Every Day):** Finally, the most important step that blankets all others is consistency. Commit to these management and training practices every single day during the teething period. It might feel sometimes like all you do is manage your puppy – but remember, this phase is relatively short. Each day that you successfully prevent a bad habit and reinforce a good one is a victory that will pay dividends for years. Patience is key: your puppy isn't chewing to annoy you; they're doing it because they need to. By empathizing with that and sticking to the plan, you'll get through teething with minimal damage and a stronger bond with your dog. On the hard days (say, when the puppy has been particularly nippy or you had a slip-up and they shredded a mail envelope), take a breath and remind yourself of the big picture – you're raising a dog who truly just behaves, and these trying moments are part of the journey. Lean on the Just Behaving principles: stay calm, be the consistent leader, guide rather than punish, and look for the lessons in setbacks. If you do, you'll find the teething stage ends before you know it, and you'll have a polite adolescent dog who respects boundaries even when left on their own.

### **Conclusion:**

Teething is often feared by new puppy owners, but with preparation and the right mindset, it's entirely manageable. In fact, within the Just Behaving framework, teething is not only a challenge to get past, it's an opportunity to deepen your puppy's training and trust. By preventing bad habits, providing outlets, and responding thoughtfully, you are showing your puppy what being part of your family looks like – even during the highs and lows of development. The guidance in this document is designed to keep you two steps ahead of your teething pup's needs, so that "misbehavior" simply has little chance to occur. Remember, every chew toy you offer, every shoe you put away, every calm correction or praise you give, is building your puppy's character. You are mentoring them through a formative time. When the last baby tooth is gone, you'll have more than just a teething survivor – you'll have a young dog

who trusts you, looks to you for direction, and has impeccable house manners regarding chewing. In other words, you'll have a Just Behaving dog in the making. Stay consistent, stay patient, and cherish the process – puppyhood (even with its needle teeth) passes quickly, but the results of your efforts will last a lifetime. Happy chewing (on the right things)!