



DOGGIE DEVELOPMENT ACADEMY
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DOG AND PUPPY MOUTHING

Puppy mouthing is a very common issue that normally goes away if treated properly but can require a little more work if present in adult dogs. Friendly mouthing often occurs during excitable greetings or playtime. More serious mouthing (such as the dog using his mouth to stop someone from touching him) can be of concern and requires a more specific treatment plan. Here a few simple guidelines that you can use when treating your dog or puppy for a friendly mouthing problem.

First there are a few restrictions:

- NEVER encourage mouthing in any shape or form. This includes not addressing it during greeting or during play.
- NEVER use a physical correction to stop mouthing. This can encourage an unwanted fear or aggression reaction.
- NEVER encourage any rough play or tug-of-war games as these can encourage a dog to become excited and possibly start mouthing.

To begin with, follow the LEADERSHIP EXERCISES (see handout). This will help establish you as the pack leader and help dictate to the dog what behavior is acceptable and allowed. This applies to both puppies and adult dogs.

It is also highly recommended that the dog or puppy has been through at least a basic obedience course especially with an adult dog. This will give you extra tools to work with when treating this issue.

Also, make sure the puppy or dog is getting plenty of exercise, if you can't take him for a walk or other physical activities, practice basic obedience or teach him a trick.

First off, always pet the puppy or adult dog when they are calm and not excited and make sure to give a verbal praise or even a food reward to help reinforce the correct behavior.

The technique you can use for any type of dog is that when the dog puts his or her teeth on you, yell "Ouch" very loudly. Normally the dog will stop

mouthings. If the dog doesn't stop, repeat the "Ouch" or cease playing or petting. A puppy doesn't like to lose their playmate so after a few times they figure out what the consequences of mouthing can be. Praising isn't necessary in this case.

In addition to the above technique, you can teach an alternate behavior. When you go and greet your dog or while petting, keep some treats handy. If the dog comes up to greet you, have them sit, then reward him if he gives the correct behavior. If he doesn't and starts to mouth, try using the "Leave It" command, then tell him to "Sit". If this doesn't work, walk away and try at the next opportunity. If you are petting the dog and he starts to mouth, tell him to "Leave It" and add at least one other additional obedience command (such as "Watch Me"). If he stops, praise and give him a reward. Then you can continue petting. If he doesn't stop the first time, try again and if this still doesn't work, cease petting and remove any attention such as ignoring him or leaving the room entirely.

You can also teach a command like "No Bite". This can help with a dog who continues to mouth after any attention has been removed. Make sure you have treats readily available. When the dog starts to mouth, say "No Bite" loudly. Repeat if necessary. When the dog stops, either do a "Sit" or "Watch Me" command, praise, and give a treat from the hand opposite from the one he just had his teeth on.

Reinforcing the correct behavior in this case is paramount so always look for the opportunity to reward the dog when possible. Again also make sure the dog is getting enough exercise or other mental stimulation. This helps to prevent behavioral problems and "doggie boredom".

If you have any questions about mouthing or any of the commands listed above, please contact us.