



Absolute Dogs.

# SECRETS TO RAISING A PUPPY

The AbsoluteDogs Way



## Why is my puppy biting me?

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# WHY IS MY PUPPY BITING ME?

**OUCH!** A puppy's teeth hurt! Those milk teeth are thin and sharp and break skin without much effort. Is your puppy biting, growling, and behaving in a way that not only is frustrating, but also seems to be just too much? It can feel disheartening when this lovely, adorable puppy (in some cases) suddenly becomes a wild, crazy furry beast with sharp teeth, growling, and frantic racing around.

**First off, before we dive too deeply into the WHY your puppy is biting and the HOW to overcome this common puppy struggle, we want to tell you that this is normal.**

This is your puppy navigating a very normal puppyhood. Some puppies practice this behaviour more often than others.

In fact, there will be some puppies that would never dream of putting their teeth on your arm. There will be others that want to put their teeth on anything and everything. You are not alone in your struggle and you can overcome this with your puppy. You will come out on the other side with a sigh of relief and newfound joy in your furry companion that no longer grabs at you, growls, and otherwise behaves in a truly frustrating way.

There is hope! Between the ages of 12-16 weeks of age, you may experience the peak of your puppy's biting tendencies. This correlates with teething. Teething is the process of your puppy losing 24 teeth

and gaining 42! Can you imagine growing 42 teeth in such a short period of time? How uncomfortable and irritating that might be?

Your puppy will be growing those teeth from approximately 16-24 weeks of age, give or take, as every dog is different. This can contribute greatly to their mouthing and biting behaviour. It is important to be patient and kind throughout this process, as they do not understand what is happening and they are responding to the discomfort in the only way they know how.

## IS BITING NORMAL?

**Biting is very normal in puppies. This not so fun behaviour is actually a puppy's way of navigating the world and exploring the world.**

How are they exploring the world?

They are tasting the world around them. They are rehearsing normal behaviour motor patterns that allow them to determine what they can and cannot chew on, as well as the different textures of the world around them. Most puppies have a preference to texture and will prefer certain textures at different points in their development.

A puppy going through the more uncomfortable phase of teething may prefer softer, more pliant, objects or surfaces. Harder textures may cause them further discomfort and pain while they are losing teeth. Your puppy is learning to navigate a human world and does not understand the expectations that exist in a human household. It's very important to recognise that your puppy is a baby animal that doesn't know their behaviour is having a negative impact on you, their amazing owner.





## WHAT IS GAMES-BASED TRAINING?

Training should be fun for everyone involved. With games-based training, you are providing your puppy with a fun, effective way to learn and you can focus on their problem behaviours without having to take the long road to get there. In traditional obedience, the answer to almost every behaviour struggle was to teach your puppy to Sit, Down, Stay, Come When Called, Walk Politely on Lead, Greet Others Politely, and to be well-behaved in society in general.

While teaching these skills are important, they won't address the WHY of your puppy biting. Ultimately, to overcome any struggle, the why needs to be determined, and then you can

focus on the solutions, the HOW TO's.

Games-based training focuses on the solution, not the problem, and provides you with access to an entire toolkit of great games and learning to help you overcome any struggle, no matter how serious, no matter the breed, the age, the size of your dog, and no matter what they've rehearsed in the past. With games-based training solutions that focus on retaining your dog's unique personality, you are able to shape their natural decision making so they choose to make better decisions in every aspect of their life. Games can be quite powerful! They turn struggles into strengths.

## GAMES AND WHY THEY WORK

### A SUMMARY

Every game in games-based training has a purpose, a reason it has been developed in order to achieve real-life results.

In this style of training, the focus is on concepts, the motivators behind good choices. If your puppy understands how to control themselves (self-control), this skill will transfer across several different struggles, including biting. Learning self-control through games that emphasize this concept will allow your puppy to make better decisions in general when self-control is required without you

constantly having to tell them what the best decision is for the moment! That's pretty incredible!

By choosing games that grow your puppy's weaker traits into strengths, you are preparing them for any situation that might arise. If you want to know more about concept training after you've explored this puppy resource, we have some great games-based training courses available for you to explore including our puppy course, AbsolutePuppy, on our website.

# WHY IS YOUR PUPPY BITING?

There are many reasons that a puppy may choose to bite something (including you!) in the world around them.



**Lack of Sleep**



**Excitement**



**Too Much Freedom/  
Access**



**Absence of a  
Healthy Outlet**



**Frustration**



**Defence**



**Genetic Predisposition**

## DOES THE APPROACH DIFFER DEPENDING ON THE CAUSE?

Absolutely! In most cases approaching your puppy with an excellent management and training plan can help you to overcome them with much less frustration. Are you ready to set your puppy up for success?

## WHAT IS MANAGEMENT?

Management is setting your puppy up for success through making tweaks to the environment. There are different ways to do this and we'll be going through all of them as we take a deeper dive into the causes of your puppy's biting behaviour. We will recap at the end. We will explore management strategies for each of the causes of puppy biting below.

Now, let's dive deeper into the why's...

# LACK OF SLEEP

Your puppy requires 17-20 hours of sleep a day! Can you believe that? Often the answer to most puppy struggles is a little more naptime, a little less adventure. You're excited that your puppy is home. You're delighted that they are enamoured with you or with the world around them, and your puppy is adorable.

You want to spend every waking hour with your puppy. Maybe you work, and so you feel guilty that your puppy isn't getting every bit of attention from you as they possibly can, so you condense a lot of fun into your mornings or your evenings (or maybe your lunch breaks).

Don't worry! Your puppy needs the sleep anyway. Their body is growing constantly. There are changes taking place that you can't even see and because you're so close to your puppy and see them every day, it's not as obvious to you as it might be to someone that only gets to see your puppy every once in a while.

SLEEP is truly the golden answer to most puppy struggles.



IMAGINE a human toddler. Have you ever experienced a two year that missed their nap time? Even if you don't have children, you may have experienced this example when out and about, at the grocery, or in any store or market.

Nap time has been missed. Excitement and adventure have taken place. Suddenly there is an outburst, a screaming and crying, outburst from one of the aisles. The quiet, hushed voice of the child's mother or father is drowned out by their toddler's frustrated cries.

“  
Before you get a dog, you can't quite imagine what living with one might be like; afterward, you can't imagine living any other way.

Caroline Knapp

”



Why is this child crying and potentially throwing themselves on the floor?

It's not because they aren't getting their way. It's not because they want something and they're going to demand it. It's not usually because they saw a candy bar that they NEED and cannot live without. Now, all of these MIGHT be the tipping point of their behaviour escalation, and yet what it comes down to is that they would be more tolerant and less likely to experience frustration in those scenarios if they had not missed their nap. They would be refreshed, revitalised, and much more capable of not having a melt down prompted by any frustration they might feel.

## YOUR PUPPY IS LIKE A TODDLER THAT HAS MISSED THEIR NAP TIME.

When your puppy is growling, biting, grabbing at you and things around them, and seems to have lost their mind, that isn't far from the truth. They are overstimulated, overly tired, and they desperately need a nap to reset their tolerance meter. In fact, there aren't a lot of thoughts (coherent ones) swirling in that brain of theirs. They truly have no idea how to stop because they:

1. Are not in a great state to make good decisions
2. Have no idea how to regulate their emotions yet (that's where you come in!)
3. And they just don't know how



## HOW CAN YOU ENCOURAGE MORE NAP TIME?

Make sure that your puppy has a quiet, calm place to relax in, that won't disturb the quality of their sleep. It's important that they are provided with a place to relax where they won't have hands, feet, human interaction, or other animal interaction that might prevent them from truly, and deeply, sleeping.

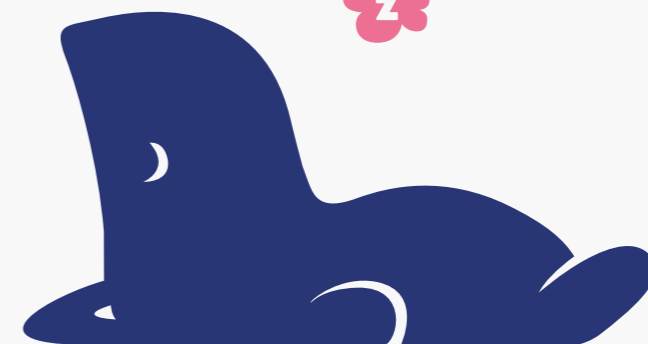


You'll notice that your puppy's ability to take these deep, essential naps will grow less and less as they age from 8 weeks and on. This isn't because they need them less. This is because the world has become much more stimulating and they're having a harder time settling as a result.



This is why having a small space such as a crate, an ex-pen, or puppy proofed area of confinement is essential to your puppy's success.

Covering this area can also help to drown out or block the distractions in the environment that might be preventing sleep from happening, also.



# LET'S PLAY A GAME...

Every time you see your puppy lay down and relax, try rewarding them with a quietly and calmly delivered food reward. This can be their daily kibble! In fact, using their daily rations to provide this important information to them (I like when you relax), can help you to increase the value of food you would have already fed your puppy.

## GAME #1 - REWARD NOTHING

In this game, your objective is to reward your puppy doing as little as possible. This includes laying down, resting their chin on the floor or their leg, hopping up on their bed and settling in, etc. Every time you see your puppy being calm and relaxed, very gently and casually reward them.



### WHY DOES THIS WORK?

Your puppy doesn't understand the language that you speak. However, they do understand positive reinforcement as information from their environment. If you reward your puppy for laying down and truly experiencing a moment of calm, they are more likely to choose that behaviour over others in the future. It's pretty cool! In fact, it's magical!

# TOO MUCH FREEDOM

Another cause of a puppy biting is that they have had too much freedom and access to you and their environment. This can be information overload for a puppy that is still learning how to be a dog! Add on that they have no idea how to co-exist with you and what your rules and expectations are for them. Also, because we can't forget this either, they have learned so much in such a short period of time just by existing.



Every single second of every day that they are awake, they are learning, absorbing, and taking in anything around them as information. This is a lot. When your puppy has too much freedom, they may feel overwhelmed. They may feel overstimulated, and as a result, that leads to the cause we mentioned above. Lack of Sleep.

Too much freedom and access to you also leads to more opportunities to make poor decisions. Of course, your puppy should have access to you! However, when they're overstimulated, giving them to an opportunity to relax and settle away from you can prevent poor decision making.

**If you give a puppy 10 choices with one being right, they are very likely to select the nine wrong choices.**

Make their choices easy for them. That is how management (this was mentioned above) will help. We discussed safe areas that your puppy can be in when they are needing a nap. When they can't be 100% supervised or you feel that your undivided attention cannot be given, a safe space like a crate, ex-pen, or puppy proofed space that is limited in size for house training success, can be the best option.

In this way, you are limiting how often your puppy gets to rehearse being naughty. You are establishing amazing habits that your puppy will continue to have as they grow, develop, and mature as your best friend and companion.

The more your puppy is able to feel overwhelmed, and the more access they have to you in those moments, they are going to more than likely bite. It's nothing personal. If anything, your arm, fingers, hands, legs, etc. are targeted much like they would target a wall, chair leg, or chew bone, in fact. The reason? It's available.

If you are down on the floor and your puppy can access your face, they will. It is available and they have a desire to bite. They will outgrow this and it's important that they don't get a lot of opportunities to practice this behaviour. Practice makes perfect! That's one behaviour you do not want your puppy to perfect.

## GAME #2 - I LOVE MY CRATE

With this game, you are encouraging your puppy's best behaviour by making their crate comfortable. This is the space they will take their naps in, as well as have relaxing, independent play. Playing this game will prevent separation related behaviours in the crate, ex-pen, or puppy proofed small area, and will develop a positive association.

With this game, the focus is on going into the crate. Simply toss food in and reward your puppy for going in by tossing several pieces of food in quickly. Then, toss one piece of food out to encourage your puppy to come out of the crate.

Gradually, you will feed longer and longer for being in the crate vs. outside of it. Closing the crate and feeding from the top (wire crate) or sides (plastic crate) can help to encourage calm when the door is closed.

### WHY DOES THIS WORK?

You are limiting rehearsal of overstimulation and working on addressing calm. Your puppy will not feel as overwhelmed and that's a great thing!



# FRUSTRATION/ EXCITEMENT



Having a puppy is exciting in general. We want to play with them, grow our relationships with them, and we want to be the best puppy owner in the world. That moment, that first moment, when our puppy tries to grab at us and grumbles or leaps around frantically, or just seems out of control, is a really defining moment. It's emotionally difficult.

When a puppy is over the top, the most logical solution can sometimes be the wrong one. For example, a hyperactive puppy that zooms around like crazy and seems frantic might need more exercise, right? That would be the logical conclusion. If your puppy is driving you crazy, and they aren't sleeping, they must need MORE.

It's a very rational conclusion. And yet, it often leads to a puppy that cannot settle, that does not know how to calm themselves, and only sleeps when they crash!

Do you know the side effects to going, going, going until the crash? To being that insanely fun and yet

exhausting energizer bunny? Those side effects are more stamina, and longer periods of craziness, because your puppy is getting really good at chaos.

The answer to this? Grow calmness. Calmness is KING!

If your puppy learns how to regulate their emotions and how to be calm even when the witching hour is calling their name, they can overcome almost any struggle. Calm is powerful.

It is important that your puppy gets adequate exercise and mental stimulation, so we will talk more about that here (this applies as a solution for all of the reasons why your puppy bites too).

————— “ —————  
**Everyone thinks they have the best dog. And none of them are wrong.**

W.R. Purche

————— ” —————

## MENTAL ENRICHMENT

What is mental enrichment? Mental enrichment is providing your puppy or dog with an opportunity to problem solve. Mental enrichment can come in many forms. It can be:



**Games that encourage using their nose**



**Games that encourage thought like how to put two feet on a box**



**Games in general that grow calmness**



**Stuffable Food Toys, such as a Kong**

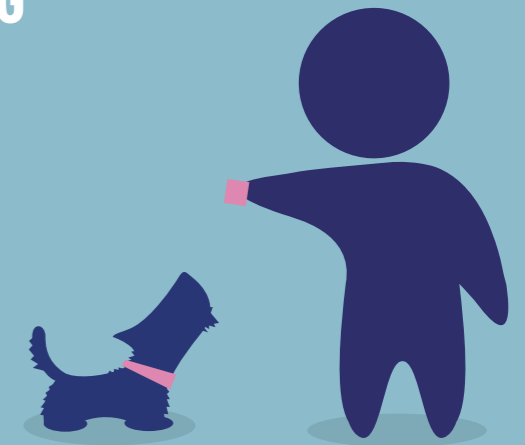
There are many ways to encourage mental enrichment and it's important that if you choose training as part of that, that you choose games that encourage a calm and settled body. If they are fast-paced, intense games (which are really fun, we have to admit), your puppy won't learn to regulate themselves and it can add to your frustration when their behaviour escalates as a result.

## GAME #3 – AEROPLANE FEEDING

A super fun game to play is aeroplane feeding. With your puppy positioned in front of you (being on a bed or a raised cot can help), start to bring a piece of food down to them, gradually.

It is important that if they start to shift their weight toward the food, try to jump toward it, or reach for it, that your hand gets pulled out of their reach. As soon as they settle again, you will continue moving the food toward their mouth. You may have to repeat pulling back and bringing the food forward several times before your puppy settles in for the ride.

When they do this, it's time to feed! This entire game should be nice, slow, and calm without too much excitement from you. You want your puppy to learn to be calm when taking reinforcement, but also this is a great way to encourage self-control, tolerance of frustration, and arousal down.





# ABSENCE OF A HEALTHY OUTLET

Does your puppy have access to chews they enjoy? This is really important!

There are four ways that a puppy self-soothes. Self-soothing is their way of regulating their emotions.

These are:

1. **Chewing/Biting**
2. **Licking**
3. **Sniffing**
4. **Shredding**

Your puppy may have a preference, and yet as they move through puppy hood, it may seem like their favourite is mostly biting and chewing.

Your puppy may be struggling because they need more access to acceptable and appropriate chew toys or other things that help them learn to self-regulate.

## CHEWING/BITING SELECTIONS

To see some great options for chewing/biting, we recommend looking at our Ditch the Bowl eBook. Observe your puppy to see what their texture preferences are and try to get things that are going to emulate their personal preferences. Also, note, that as they grow and move through the teething process, their preferences are very likely going to change.

Another great way to provide them with chews is to have quite a

selection and then alternate through what is available. Changing out what is available every 1-3 days or so keeps the options available novel and interesting and your puppy is less likely to disregard them for other things.

[Get the Ditch the Bowl eBook](#)

## LICKING

Stuffable food toys are amazing for puppies that have a preference for licking. Also note, that it's very likely your puppy may like a couple of methods of self-regulation so try not to restrict them to only one option.

Kongs are excellent, as are Calm Mats from A-OK9. It's important with any toy, enrichment item, or food item that you give to your puppy, that it is supervised and that you provide guidance on its use. For a Calm Mat, you may want to hold it down so that your puppy doesn't get the idea that they should also chew on it! Once they get the concept, you can just enjoy the show.

[Calm Mats from A-OK9](#)

## SNIFFING

A great way to provide enrichment and a healthy outlet for excess energy is through sniffing. You can scatter your puppy's food in the grass or in snuffle mat to provide them with an opportunity to sniff. If your puppy is being really fresh and zooming, this is a great way to de-escalate by providing them with a snuffle mat when you put them in their safe, calm space.

[Scent Course](#)



## SHREDDING

Destruction is okay sometimes! If your puppy tends to be on the destructive side, giving them things that they can safely shred is definitely an option! Monitor them to make sure they are not ingesting anything. Some great options are cardboard boxes!

Also, **APPROPRIATE PLAY**, can be amazing as a healthy outlet!

It is important when playing with your puppy with toys that the toys provide you with a bit of a safety layer.

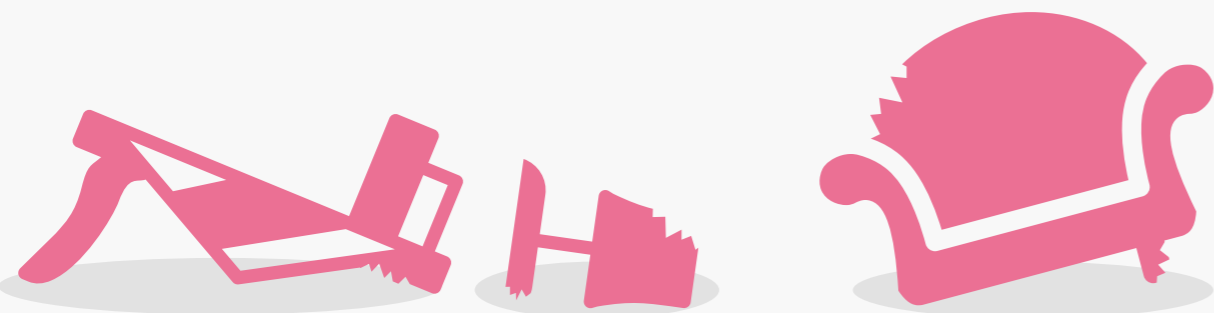
This means that you use toys that provide space, such as a longer tug toy. In this way, when your puppy is playing (and not all that coordinated) with the tug, they can't access your hand with their teeth if they accidentally miss grabbing the toy.

Keep this in mind when selecting toys that are meant to be interactive for both you and your puppy.

Also, try to only give access to chews when you're not interacting, and keep the fun, interactive tug toys away in a safe space so that they can come out when you're going to be involved. This is a great solution for balls, also.

Teaching your puppy to retrieve by using two balls can also help define clear space requirements. Your puppy is less likely to want to grab at or bite at your if they have a toy in their mouth.

Encouraging and celebrating any time they interact with an appropriate toy can help them to develop better habits with where they tend to want to put their mouth. That's a win-win for everyone!



## GENETIC PREDISPOSITION

Your puppy may be genetically designed to favour biting over other options. Some puppies because of their breed have a tendency to bite more often than others.

For example, a Border Collie puppy may want to bite at heels or anything in motion due to their breed's sheep herding background, while a Pug puppy may not be as inclined, as they aren't as motion sensitive and don't feel compelled to react to motion as a result of their genetic background.

Another example would be a Labrador Retriever puppy. They are bred to retrieve for the hunter. As a result, their desire to use their mouth in life has been magnified. They are more likely to want to chew or grab at things, and that includes you! The same could be said for a Golden Retriever.

**Note: There are always exceptions to the rule and you may have a Labrador Retriever puppy that wouldn't dream of putting their mouth on you.**

Learn about your breed tendencies and play games that are going to help your puppy make better decisions, even alongside their natural impulses.

Looking back at our examples, a Border Collie puppy may need games that focus on calm and disengagement from distractions (what puppy doesn't, really?) and so their games might focus on being able to stay calm despite things moving around them, including dogs, people, etc.

The really cool thing about games is that you don't need to put your puppy in the situation to prepare them for the situation. We'll talk more on that soon.

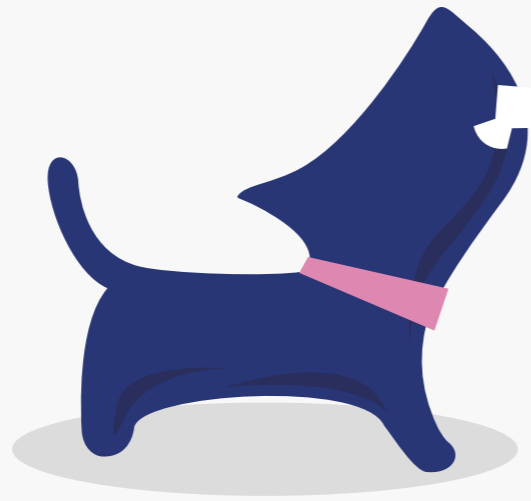
# DEFENSE

This isn't as common, and yet it does happen. A puppy may feel as if they have no other choice than to defend themselves. This happens in some cases when they've been overly handled and have not enjoyed being handled. This is just one example.

Perhaps their collar has been grabbed too frequently to manage them when they've made bad decisions. This is a common way to handle a puppy in their worst moments, and so it's not uncommon to see a puppy that struggles with hands moving toward them as a result. Having your puppy drag a lead can help with this so that you don't have to reach for them, you can just casually step on the line they are dragging.

A puppy may choose to bite or snap if they are cornered in a crate (you just want them to come out to play) or if someone surprises or startles them by touching them without them being aware that it might happen.

If you feel that your puppy's



behaviour is a result of fear, a really great programme is our NBN Core Programme, that covers some great confidence building games, as well as optimism growing games that can support you and your puppy on this journey. Our mission is your success.

“  
**Fall in love with a dog, and in many ways you enter a new orbit, a universe that features not just new colors but new rituals, new rules, a new way of experiencing attachment.**

Caroline Knapp

## GAME #4 – HAND OVER HEAD, RELAX

For puppies that have a difficult time with handling, one game that you can play is this one!

With your puppy in a calm state of mind, relaxed at the start of the session, simply move your hand, say Yes if your puppy acknowledges it by calmly looking, and then reward your puppy. This could be a finger twitch or your hand just swaying a little at your side.

For each repetition, try to move your hand so that the palm is facing down and is over your puppy. At first start really high.

Gradually, offer your hand closer.



At any point, if your puppy struggles and tries to step back, you've progressed too quickly. This may take multiple sessions, and yet the idea is that your puppy embraces the fact that hands moving toward, around, or to touch them, are not always invasive and can be safe.

## WOW, SO THOSE ARE THE CAUSES OF PUPPY BITING!

Let's recap!



**Lack of**



**Excitement**



**Too Much Freedom/Access**



**Absence of a Healthy Outlet**



**Frustration**



**Defence**



**Genetic Predisposition**

# WHAT DO YOU DO IN THE SITUATION?

Ultimately, you want to be prepared for the situation by implementing the management strategies provided above.

However, no one is perfect, and there will be moments where it happens anyway!

Great ways to interrupt a puppy's biting decisions are to:

## END PLAY

The puppy is seeking out a social opportunity with you and just isn't aware of the rules of engagement (no biting please!). Simply remove them to their safe, calm space for some independent self-regulation opportunities such as those discussed in the section on providing them with healthy outlets.

## GIVE PUPPY AN OPPORTUNITY FOR A NAP

This is the number one way to handle this! Your puppy is probably feeling frustrated, overwhelmed, over stimulated, and even more, tired! The world is an exhausting place to live in when you're figuring out everything as you go, so many, many naps are a must!

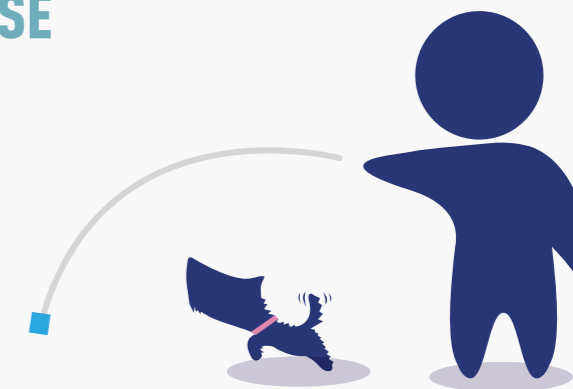
## ATTENTION NOISE

You can use an attention noise that you have worked on as a game.

## GAME #5 – ATTENTION NOISE

### Step 1

With your puppy ready for games (not overly excited), toss a piece of food away from you so that your puppy goes to get it. Do not toss it too far, just a couple feet.



### Step 2

Make a noise just as your puppy finishes the food. This can be a kissy noise or a noise you will feel compelled to use. It should be done in a way that doesn't imply punishment or disappointment.



### Step 3

When your puppy turns to look at you in response to the sound, cheer "Yes" and then reward them.



The purpose is to grow a positive association with the sound. You can use this sound to interrupt bad decisions and then redirect to great decisions. Only use this game to interrupt just before a decision might be made, or to give an opportunity to redirect, like in the case of puppy biting.

A pattern that might be useful would be

### **Step 1**

Your puppy is noticeably getting excited and starts showing signs that they might start biting.

### **Step 2**

Use an attention sound to redirect their attention. Because you've played it separately from a biting scenario many, many times, they stop what they're doing and look up expectantly.

### **Step 3**

Cheer them on and then scatter 5-6 pieces of food to the ground in a small area so they can snuffle it up, much like they would a snuffle mat.

### **Step 4**

Redirect to an appropriate toy (if that works for your puppy) or move them to their safe space with a Kong or other healthy outlet so they can calm down.

## **WHEN IS BITING GOING TO STOP?**

That's a great question! As long as you set your puppy up for success as discussed in the resource above, and make they do not practice the behaviour often, a puppy will typically stop biting as they reach adolescence. It's a very natural process and part of their growth and development.

Be patient! Your puppy will become a well-behaved dog in no time.

## **WOW! THAT'S A LOT OF INFO!**

You are the best puppy owner for your puppy.  
Keep being amazing!