



Excessive Mouthing and Biting from Your Puppy

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When you play with your puppy, do they mouth you or grab your clothing? If you answered yes – the good news is your puppy is normal! The bad news is you must teach your puppy the important lesson that people are not puppies!

You must not act like a puppy when you play.

Chase and be chased, pounce and grab – that is how puppies play. The surest way to encourage mouthing and biting is to get down on all fours and act like a dog. Doing so will create learned (and undesired) behaviors that puppies will use when they encounter other people, children and visitors in your home. If you don't want your puppy to treat people like dogs, don't engage in that kind of "play time" with them.

Why pet parents must discourage mouthing and biting.

There is a direct correlation between mouthing as a puppy and appropriate play as an adult dog – why? Feedback. Puppies learn bite inhibition (to be careful with the amount of pressure they use) during play with you, with dogs and with other people. Through this important learning process, puppies realize that if they bite too hard, their friends won't want to play or could become angry.

What to do when your puppy mouths or bites.

Whether your puppy bites your skin, your clothes or your shoes, yell "Ow!" and pretend you're really hurt (even though you may not be) and end the play session immediately. The most effective way to do this is by turning your back to your dog or walking away. Over time, your dog will learn that there is a correlation between mouthing or biting too hard and the end of play time.

Another option is offering your puppy a chew toy when they attempt to mouth you or your clothing. Over time, this too will help demonstrate to your puppy what kinds of things are acceptable to chew on.

Be a good leader.

Puppyhood is a formative stage that determines much of a dog's behavior later on in life. During this time, puppies will naturally look to their pet parent for structure and routine. This means that you need to be patient and consistent with the rules you set – especially when it comes to mouthing. Otherwise, your puppy will be unable to understand and demonstrate the kind of behaviors you expect from them.

If you have a pet behavior question or would like some training assistance,
San Diego Humane Society is here to help!
Visit our website at www.sdhumane.org to view our behavior and training options,
or call our **Behavior Helpline at 619-299-7012 ext. 2244** to speak with a trainer.