



How to Teach Bite Inhibition

Your puppy can definitely learn not to nip things that are near his face and since this is when most nipping occurs, reinforcing his correct choices is crucial. You should see immediate improvement in his bite inhibition with this technique. However, because he's a puppy, you'll need to repeat it over and over, especially when you have tempting smells on your clothes and hands!

Management combined with consistent training is the best method to teach your puppy, or adult dog, not to use his mouth to nip/bite.

Rules to abide by:

- Have a safe and comfortable spot where you can leave the puppy when you cannot play with him or watch him, like a crate, or a small area fenced-off with baby gates (i.e. mud room or entryway). Nippy puppies go back to their own space for a while for a 2-minute 'time-out'.
- When the puppy grabs you or your clothing, stop moving. The movement seems like play to the dog. The fun is gone if you are still.
- When the puppy starts nipping/biting, disengage him gently and provide a chew toy instead, like a Kong with peanut butter. Keep a couple of chewable replacements for your clothes and hands handy in each room where the puppy spends time. I have at least 6 frozen peanut butter or yogurt-smear Kongs in my freezer at any given time for my puppy.

Teach "Gentle" and "Off"

Teaching the puppy to use his mouth gently is an important part of training. Doing it positively creates clear communication without punishment. This technique is very simple, and powerful. You are simply rewarding the puppy for choosing not to nip. When the puppy makes the right choice, he earns his praise and reward!

- If you enclose your fist, your puppy will have less area to bite. So, take your closed fist, with a treat in it, and put it in front of the puppy's face. Say "Gentle" or "Easy". If he doesn't nip, or if he licks your hand, roll the treat out of your hand. Repeat this. If your puppy bumps his soft nose against your fist, that's great. If he uses his teeth, say "Uh-uh...Gentle" and try again.
- Dab some peanut butter on the back of your hand to encourage licking, while saying "no bite, good girl, no biting", or "Gentle...good job, gentle".
- You may also teach 'Off' by putting your closed fist in front of the puppy's face, and say "Off". Don't pull your hand away. When your puppy backs off or hesitates, immediately give him the treat.
- Raise the criteria for a reward by both lengthening the amount of time the puppy can have your hand/the treat in front of his nose without nipping, and by altering the distance from his face.
- Repeat this exercise with a toy or chew bone. Praise and treat for calmness and staying 'off' rather than grabbing at the object. If at any time he tries to nip, stop, put your fist or other object out of sight and start again a little further away. When you have clicked and treated him several times for staying calm, praise and treat and give him the object and let him enjoy it. He is learning that you will give him nice things but only if he waits for permission.
- Do the same with your open hand. Do the same with your index finger. Try it with your shoes and your clothing.

Some puppies and dogs will get even more excited and nippy if you praise with a high-pitched voice or get too excited. In this case, try saying "Good job" in a happy, but low voice.

Always make sure to give your puppy something permissible to chew on, while you scratch his back and belly. This helps him to learn that some things are okay to chew on.

Also, don't let the puppy play with your hands or clothes. Simply stop the fun, and leave. If biting always stops the fun, biting at hands and clothes will likely occur less often.