

Beggin' to Behave

Sandy Strychor, ABCDT

How to Stop Puppies from Mouthing and Nipping

The New Rule: Playtime STOPS when you nip!

- Teach puppy that mouthing and nipping a person's skin or clothes, at any time, stops play and attention IMMEDIATELY.
 - When puppy nips, get up and walk out of the room for a short amount of time.
 - Return and resume playing.
- If puppy mouths again, play stops again. If puppy keeps her teeth to herself, the game and attention continues.
- Give puppy appropriate toys to keep her entertained and redirect mouthing onto something more appropriate.
 - Puppies love to seek out, grab, play, and pull. This play also helps break the mouthing habit.
 - Try a rubber toy stuffed with puppy-appropriate food, this helps turn a mouthing puppy into a dog that is playing with you through a toy.
- Expect a second chewing phase around the 6-9 month adolescence period.
- Play is really important for your puppy but there have to be boundaries.
- This is not an easy habit to break in all puppies. It is important to find what motivates your puppy, whether it is praise, toys, treats, or a combination.

What Not to Do:

- Avoid playing roughly with your puppy. This encourages mouthing and roughhousing.
- Do not just tell your puppy "no" when she is mouthing on you. Even negative attention is still attention and will not successfully discourage the mouthing. Just get up and walk away.
- **NEVER SLAP OR HIT YOUR PUPPY!** Your puppy will probably think one of two things:
 - You are playing and he'll come back trying to bite you even harder or
 - He will learn to fear you and your hands.

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Alternate Methods

- **Keep a leash attached** to your dog when you're around to supervise him. Let the leash drag on the floor and instead of leaving the room when your dog mouths you, immediately take hold of his leash and calmly lead him to a quiet area. When you get there put him behind a baby gate, or in his crate, to confine him.
 - Then leave the area or turn your back to your dog for the brief time-out. When the time-out is over, release him, and resume play or attention.
 - **Redirect** your puppy biting by slowly removing your hand from his mouth and replace with one of his dog toys. Whatever inappropriate item your puppy is biting whether it be your hand, arm, feet, or face (like in the example from our reader) slowly remove the item from your puppies jaws and replace with his favorite dog toy or chew then leave him alone to play with his toy for a while.
 - Have lots of different textured toys so your puppy won't bored:
 - Nylabones
 - Benebones
 - KONG Toys – [KONG Extreme!](#) for an aggressive chewer
 - Bully Sticks
 - Himalayan Dog Chews
 - No Hide Dog Chews
- **Give your puppy a command.** If you've been working on basic obedience then giving your puppy a command will sometimes get him to stop biting and go into obedience mode. Try using 'Sit', 'Down', or 'Find It'.
- **Exercise your dog's mind and body** with plenty of exercise both physically (long walks, playing in the yard, etc.) and mentally (training and get him thinking).